DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 120 500 CE 006 806

AUTHOR	Nickse, Ruth S.
TITLE	A Report on Adult Learners: A Profile of Fifty Adult Learners With Their Reactions to an Adult Life Skills, Competency-Based, Applied Performance Assessment System.
INSTITUTION	Regional Learning Service of Central New York, Syracuse.
PUB DATE	Jan 76
NOTE	99p.; For the Development of the Performance Assessment System, see ED 110 740
AVAILABLE FROM	Syracuse Research Corporation, Syracuse University, Merrill Lane, Syracuse, New York 13210 ($5.00)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$4.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Characteristics; Adult Education Programs; *Adult Students; Educational Alternatives; Educational Assessment; Equivalency Tests; Formative Evaluation; *High School Equivalency Programs; Performance Based Education; *Performance Tests; Program Evaluation; Program Improvement; *Student Characteristics; Student Opinion; *Student Reaction
IDENTIFIERS	*Central N Y External High Diploma Program

ABSTRACT

The report, based on the first 11 month's field test experience of the New York State external high school diploma program with its competency-based assessment system, provides background information for use by adult educators in program development. The positive impact of the program and a brief overview of its objectives are presented. Section One of the report continues the story of the field test demonstration (begun in an earlier paper on the development of a performance assessment system) and profiles the first 50 graduates. It discusses: demographic information (age, sex, and race), reasons for dropping out of school, motivations for pursuing the high school credential, their occupations, and leisure and learning activities. Section Two details the adults' reactions to performance testing. Information includes: the learners' perceptions of the content of the tests (life skills competencies) and the process of assessment (take-home tasks, oral and performance interviews); learning strategies, problem-solving approaches and resources used; comments about learning consultants, tutors, assessors, families, and friends who assisted the candidates; graduates' suggestions for program improvement; and graduates' goals for the future. Appended materials include: media reprints on the program and a summary of statistics on the first 50 graduates of the program. (Author/MS)

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ED120500

The New York State External High School Diploma Program

A REPORT ON ADULT LEARNERS

A Profile of Fifty Adult Learners With Their Reactions to an Adult Life Skills, Competency-Based, Applied Performance Assessment System

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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by

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January 1976

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IMPACT OF THE NEW YORK STATE EXTERNAL HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAM

National Impact

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then the need for an alternative such as the New York State External High School Diploma Program has been confirmed. Several external diploma projects modeled directly on this program have already become operational in other states. Texas is the site of 12 pilot projects in such major cities as Houston, Abilene, Waco and Austin.

Urbana, Illinois, has received funding for an external diploma project and is in a planning stage. Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon and Ohio are known to be developing models. Such immediate response on a national scale focuses sharply on the depth of the need for alternative diploma programs.[1] It is an honor and a pleasure for the staff of this project to have been first with the match which lit the flame that may light the lives of so many adults.

* * * * * *

The external diploma program has received direct publicity as a featured presentation at several national Adult Education association meetings. Major journal and newspaper articles have been, or are being, written about the program. "Development of a Performance Assessment

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[1] Research evidence (APL Study, Northcutt, University of Texas, Austin, 1975) attesting to the dismal performance of a national sample of adults in functional competence areas has been reported by U. S. Commissioner of Education.

System for the Central New York External High School Diploma Program" (Nickse, 1975), a progress report has been entered into several national educational bibliographies. A list of these exposures follows:

Journal and Newspaper Articles

Phi Delta Kappa, October 1975 (see Appendix A)
New York Times, October 29, 1975 (see Appendix B)
Higher Education Review (British), Fall 1975

In preparation:

Contemporary Educational Psychology
New Jersey Adult Educator (Winter 76)
Christian Science Monitor
Washington Post

Presentations

National Conference Measurement and Evaluation/Clearinghouse on Applied Performance Testing, Washington, May 1975

Adult Education Association, Salt Lake City, Utah, October 1975

National Association for Public and Continuing Adult Education, Chicago, November 1975 (Award for program from Committee on Social Justice of NAPCAE)

Northeastern Educational Research Association, New York, October 1975

In preparation:

Adult Education Research Conference, Toronto, April 1975

Distribution (Ford Foundation report of February 1975, "Development of a Performance Assessment System for the Central New York External High School Diploma Program," Nickse)

ERIC Clearinghouse in Career Education, CE 0045 42, January 1976
ERIC Clearinghouse in Urban Education, ED 099 436
Clearinghouse for Applied Performance Testing (CAPT), Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Citation

In Handbook of Management Standards for Awarding High School Diplomas, CEEB/ETS, Massachusetts Advisory Council on Education, Boston, 1975

Site Visits

Representatives from DANTES (Florida), Massachusetts, New Jersey Puerto Rico, New York

Also chosen by the Clearinghouse for Applied Performance Testing (CAPT, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory) as a major site of applied performance testing activity

Requests for Information (see Appendix C)

Local Impact

The external diploma assessment program has been in operation in a five county area in Central New York for 12 months, from January 1975 to December 1975. The achievement of program design and the continuing field test has resulted in the awarding of high school diplomas to 66 adults. More than sixty persons are presently involved in the program.

On the occasion of each of two graduation ceremonies held this year, distinguished educators from the New York State Education Department, Commissioner Ewald Nyquist and Dr. Robert Seckendorf, Assistant Commissioner for Occupational Education, warmly supported the program. Each has addressed a group of graduates, their families, friends, and influential members of the community, and lauded both the graduates and the unique characteristics of the external testing system. Dissemination of information about the program continues to occur through a variety of informal channels: learning consultants from the Regional Learning Service speak about the program, local media report on graduations, and graduates themselves enthusiastically recommend it to friends.

Further, a second assessment site has been opened in Cortland New York to better serve interested adults who find it difficult to travel to Syracuse for assessment. Moreover, exploration of alternative delivery system are

under way as the Oswego New York school district adapts the model, awarding its local diploma to graduates from that area. At the local level within the five-county demonstration area, the program continues to gether momentum.

Tentative plans to expand the program to fourteen selected sites in New York State by September, 1976 are under consideration by the State Education Department, Bureau of Adult and Continuing Education under the directon of Dr. Mary Reiss.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND BACKGROUND

The New York State External High School Diploma Program, guided in its design by a set of assumptions about adult learners, is essentially a competency-based applied performance assessment system. It is predicated on the RLS understanding of the need for an external high school diploma program as a viable alternative to existing credentialing. It rewards competent adults for the demonstration of academic and occupational skills which they use every day as they cope with the confusion and challenge of living in 20th Century America.

The objectives of the program are (1) to field test (demonstrate) all components of the model for an external high school diploma program, (2) to award diplomas to those who demonstrate the competencies which constitute the content of the external diploma requirements, (3) to develop the necessary public climate for the new external credentialing program, and (4) to explore the feasibility of program transfer and replicability.

In late 1972, the establishment of the External High School Diploma Program in New York State was recommended to the Commissioner of Education by Stephen K. Bailey, at that time Chairman of the Policy Institute of the Syracuse University Research Corporation. The program was an outcome of a Policy Institute study of adult learning supported by the Ford Foundation.[1]

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[1] Stephen K. Bailey, Francis U. Macy, Donn F. Vickers, Alternative Paths to the High School Diploma, National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1973.

The conceptual guidelines of the program were developed by a Design Group coordinated by RLS representing persons from education, business and labor in Central New York and were proposed to the Commissioner in the document entitled, "The Regents External High School Diploma: A Proposal to the Commissioner." This work was performed under a planning grant, April-June 1973, from the New York State Education Department.

Subsequent funding in 1973 to 1975 by both the Ford Foundation and the State Education Department enabled content and process to be developed and field tested at an operational level, including identification of competencies and performance indicators, development of new assessment instruments and the establishment of an assessment procedure based on what adults know and can do.

The Design Group, which disbanded upon completion of its mission, had formulated a model for an external diploma program which combined both structure and flexibility and emphasized two categories: Generalized Competencies and Individualized Competencies. The Generalized Competencies were considered by the Design Group as prerequisites to further learning and job seeking and to embody functional skills necessary for adults to cope with daily life. All candidates for the diploma must successfully demonstrate the minimum Generalized Competencies in the Life Skills area.

The Individualized Competencies were designed to recognize special skills adults have developed and are demonstrated in three areas: occupational/vocational skills, advanced academic skills or advanced specialized competencies. Candidates choose one of these skill areas for their Individualized Assessment.

A description of both the content and the process of the program are contained in the document entitled, "Development of a Performance Assessment System for the Central New York External High School Diploma Program."[1]

The program became operational in January 1975. The first commencement exercises were held at the State College campus at Cortland on March 11, 1975. Commissioner Ewald Nyquist addressed the first 18 graduates of the program, their families and friends, and personally presented the graduates their diplomas. The event was hosted by the Cortland City School Board which awards the diploma on a regional basis to those who meet the requirements.

On October 21, 1975, the second graduation exercises were held at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University. Dr. Robert Seckendorf, Assistant Commissioner for Occupational Education, presented the address to the 35 most recent graduates, their families, friends, and interested members from the community. Regent Harold Newcomb also personally congratulated the new graduates.

By December 1975, 66 adults had earned a Cortland High School diploma through this external, competency-based applied performance testing system.

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[1] Ruth S. Nickse, Ph.D., Syracuse University Research Corporation, April 1975.

SECTION I

A PROFILE OF FIFTY ADULT LEARNERS

Abstract

Section I of this report continues the story of the field test demonstration and is a profile of the first fifty graduates of the program.

It contains demographic information on the age, sex, and race of persons attracted to the idea of an alternative approach to earning a diploma.

It describes their reasons for dropping out of school, and also their motivations for pursuing the high school credential. Their occupations, leisure and learning activities are also reported.

Adult educators and administrators of adult programs may find this data of value in understanding a small cross-section of adult learners in depth. It is essential information for the developers of this particular program because it identifies more clearly the target population for whom this program was designed.

Introduction

This report provides background information of value to adult educators who need to know more about adult learners in order to develop programs that meet their needs with dignity as well as diplomas. The report is based on the first eleven months' field test experience of the external diploma program with its competency-based assessment system. The characteristics of these first fifty graduates of the program can aid in defining the potential users of such an alternative system, but further demonstration in settings other than the Regional Learning Service with different adult populations will be needed to draw a complete picture of the feasibility of the external diploma program.

Lack of high school diploma is cited as a source of humiliation and a detriment to the attainment of many of the goals of middle-class life; job status and mobility, economic achievement and accessibility to higher education.[1] For the most part, our group of newly graduated adults confirms the psychological discomfort of not having a diploma, and describes personal feelings of inadequacy because they lacked the credential, some for almost all of their adult lives.

Yet, on many critical dimensions, the group would be indistinguishable from those who completed high school at the appropriate time during their adolescence. As a group, they might be classified as solid, stable citizens, holding skilled and semi-skilled jobs, managing persons and resources

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[1] Stephen K. Bailey, Francis U. Macy, Donn F. Vickers, Alternative Paths to the High School Diploma, National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1973.

competently, financially independent, contributors to community life and highly motivated to learn.

One very significant finding based on the field test so far, is that there are indeed many competent adults in the population who have taught themselves, through the experience of learning, working, and solving life's problems, many of the functional competencies needed by us all. The external diploma program recognizes and rewards demonstration of competencies wherever they have been learned. Perhaps the most important preliminary conclusion of this study is that there are persons in the population who see this program as a challenge, an opportunity, and a step towards a fuller life.

The original proposal for the program was prepared by a design group representative of business, industry, school administrators, students and interested lay persons, as a result of reviewing the dismal census statistics which report that six million New York State citizens over the age of 25 do not have a high school diploma.[1]

The question posed by the design group in 1973 was, "Who's out there?" or "Who would benefit from flexible testing and learning options that can lead to a high school diploma?" The successful completion of the external diploma program by sixty-six adults since the official start of the demonstration field test in January 1975, both testifies to the need for such a program and helps answer the initial question, "Who would benefit from such an alternative?"

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[1] U. S. Government Census, 1970.

The answer tells us that users of the alternative credentialing program will be men and women ranging in age from 18-61, black and white, employed in diverse jobs, motivated by a variety of goals. They include such persons as:

-- The 50 year old manager of a branch office of a nationally known insurance company who supervises the work of 45 persons; he'd like to retire and go to law school.

-- The 56 year old chief operator of a nearby city water works who needs his diploma to maintain his license as an operations engineer.

-- A 34 year old sheriff who has worked 11 years on the job and now wishes to take further training in the FBI academy which requires him to have a high school diploma.

-- A 22 year old woman, manager of a small grocery store, who "grew up in the business," dropped out of high school to marry, and dreams of becoming a veterinarian.

-- A 19 year old auto mechanic who wants to become the manager of a service station.

The brief personal glimpses above lead to a veritable Pandora's box of questions about these adult learners.

1. Who are the people attracted to the External High School Diploma Program?
2. When did they drop out of school, and why?
3. What kinds of jobs do they have?
4. How have these adults fared economically without a high school diploma?
5. What do they do with their leisure time?
6. Why do they need or want a high school diploma now?

Answers to the above questions follow in this section of the report which describes the demographic characteristics of the first fifty graduates of the

diploma program. The summary of the data will be found in Appendix D.

Data Source and Collection

Facts and observations about these learners are derived from several different sources. Case studies of graduates are compiled as part of the field test of the assessment process. They are begun by learning consultants during initial interviews with learners, and are kept current by a member of the assessment team. Demographic information as well as information about candidates' prior learning experiences and community activities are collected through case studies. Oral interviews which are an actual part of the assessment of self-awareness competencies of the learners provide information on candidates' goals and values.

The primary source of the data, however, is an extensive interview protocol which is administered individually by trained members of the assessment team. The open-ended interview schedule contains 66 questions in six basic categories: testing techniques related to diagnostic testing, the take-home tasks and the oral interviews; test content and its relationship to adult life; the learning outcomes of testing; counseling and learning as it is related to external diploma management; reactions to the specialized assessment features of the program; and post-graduation plans of the graduates.

This report is a summary and an analysis of information which has been gathered on the first fifty graduates of the program since January 1975. From the data bank, no "typical" portrait of a seeker of an external diploma can be drawn because there is much variety among the graduates. However, there are similarities that are perhaps more important than differences; in this

case, similitaries and differences invite comments and speculation.

It should be stated that the data are affected by the developmental role played by RLS in the design of the program. The adult learners who are the data source for this report were attracted to the program as they sought the counseling services of RLS, an educational and career guidance agency for adults. Through counseling interviews, alternative routes to a high school diploma are fully explained. It is those persons who made the decision to earn a diploma by fulfilling requirements of the external diploma program that are the subjects of this study. The questions mentioned on page 11 are the substance of the report which follows.

1. Who Are the People Attracted to the External High School Diploma Program?

Age of Graduates. Census figures reveal that in Central New York (Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga and Oswego Counties) 200,000 adults (43% of those over 25) are not high school graduates. In addition, in the 16-21 year age group, approximately 23,000 persons (34%) do not presently hold a diploma and are not enrolled in school.[1] The statistics point to the need for educational alternatives for a wide variety of the adult population.

The external diploma program accepts any person over 18 years of age from the five-county area defined as the demonstration site. The 18 year age lower limit, with no upper age limit, is the result of discussion and decision by the Regional Committee which acts as the school board for the program. Because the program emphasizes the demonstration of adult life skills regardless of how, when or where they have been acquired, the process is designed to enable adults

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[1] U. S. Government Census, 1970.

to take advantage of a testing system that rewards them for competencies learned through life's experiences. Therefore, there has been little effort to attract early school leavers or dissatisfied youths to the program at this time. It is essentially for adults. The group studied has 26 males and 24 females. The average age of the group is 40 years old.

Age Range of Graduates (N=50)

Range in Years	Percent
18 - 19	4%
20 - 29	16%
30 - 49	58%
50 - 69	20%
Unknown	2%

Sex, Race and Marital Status of Candidates

The sex, race and marital status of the first graduates of the program are presented below:

	Total	Percent
Race		
Black	16	32%
White	34	68%
Sex		
Male	26	52%
Female	24	48%
Marital Status		
Married	35	70%
Divorced	4	8%
Separated	7	14%
Widowed	2	4%
Single	2	4%

County of Residence of Graduates. Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga and Oswego Counties are identified as the five-county region for the field test demonstration. Onondaga and Cortland represent the counties of origin of the majority of graduates. There are more learning consultants and there is more focus on the Regional Learning Service as an adult counseling agency in the urban metropolitan area of Syracuse because of its population density than in any other area. These facts account for the concentration of graduates from Onondaga County (56%) and reflect the familiarity of more persons with both the Regional Learning Service and the External Diploma Program. Thirty percent of the group is from Cortland County. The facts that the diploma itself is awarded by the City of Cortland, and that there has been considerable newspaper coverage of the program in that city account for the comparatively high representation from Cortland County. Commissioner Ewald B. Nyquist himself presented diplomas to the first graduates of the program in March 1975, at a graduation exercise hosted by the Board of Education at Cortland. This joyful ceremonious occasion, witnessed by several hundred persons, contributed to community knowledge of the program and increased enrollment in that county.

CONCLUSION: On the basis of the demographic data on the first fifty graduates of the program, two conclusions can be drawn. First, the program is attracting a heterogenous population identified in earlier documents as likely beneficiaries of an external testing system; and second, individuals reached by the program so far are an infinitesimal number of the total described in census data as uncredentialed at the high school level.

2. When Did They Drop Out of School and Why?

The stigma associated with dropping out, being pushed out of school, of not having a high school credential, is well documented. Although adult educators now regard drop outs as stop outs, this labeling distinction has not been adopted throughout the general population. Yet the term "stop out" more nearly describes the first fifty graduates of the external diploma program, though they would describe themselves with the more familiar and more derogatory label.

The data shows that over half the group dropped out in the 9th or 10th year of high school, presumably when they reached age 16 and were legally eligible to leave formal schooling. Thirty-two percent left high school in the 11th and 12th grades. Few of them cite poor performance as the reason for leaving. Perhaps this admission is too difficult to make, or perhaps it simply is not true. Since the external diploma program does not consider prior high school performance as either pertinent or required for admission, no specific evidence of prior school performance is collected.

But the reasons cited for dropping out of school by the group are familiar. Early marriages, family responsibilities that required them to begin working, disinterest in school programs, and quitting to enlist in the service during the 1940's (a highly acceptable reason at the time) summarize their responses to this question. However, for almost 75 percent of the group, ending formal high school without the credential never signalled an end to learning. One of the most outstanding characteristics of this

group is their tremendous interest in and enthusiasm for learning. Of equal interest is their depth of involvement in community life. It is also interesting to note that two-fifths of the group, or 20 persons, like many other adults who have dropped out of school, had already attempted to earn a high school diploma since leaving school through the General Education Development program, a diploma equivalency.

The GED, an educational alternative, founded after World War II to enable returning veterans to receive their high school diploma through a ten-hour proficiency examination, is the most common alternative to a high school credential offered in the nation. New York State currently invests several millions of dollars a year in a wide-ranging effort to credential adults in this manner. For many adults, it has been a viable alternative. For the 20 persons from this group who had attempted it and failed, it represented a difficult experience. The mass testing conditions under which the test is given, the classes that prepared them for the exam, the impersonal and delayed feedback they received on their performance and the irrelevance of the content to their lives all are cited as interfering with their performance. Whatever the cause of their failures, it is a mark of their great determination that they exposed themselves again to yet another test, another chance at humiliation, another chance at the brass ring. Persistance is surely a strong element in the personalities of these twenty individuals. There is no explanation for the twenty-four persons who had not taken the GED examination. Perhaps they had heard of the content of the exam or the conditions of the testing and declined to take advantage of it

for these reasons. Perhaps, as there is some evidence, they simply never heard of the GED.

3. What Kinds of Jobs Do They Have?

There is increasing pressure to be credentialed in a credential-mad society which views high school drop outs with dismay, discrimination, and disdain. National statistics correlate lack of diploma with low status, low income, and poorly paid, dead-end jobs.[1] For a vast majority of the population perhaps this is true. For this small group, it is not necessarily so. A technological society needs skilled workers, but skills and credentials do not necessarily travel hand-in-hand. And, some individuals who are interprising, hard-working and conscientious can still carve out a place for themselves in the work world without a diploma, as many of this group have done. These graduates for the most part, are accomplished in the work world.

Jobs Held by Graduates. Among the first fifty graduates are ten persons, or 20 percent, working in the helping professions (Health and Human Services Education) as counselor's aide, teacher aide, nurses' aide, mental hygiene therapists and community workers. These jobs are held mainly by women who have struggled with a double handicap in the job market, that of being women and being uncredentialed, and in some cases, being Black.

Factory-related jobs reported by the men include more supervisory responsibilities than the women report, such as quality control supervisor; foreman, print department; foreman, production and quality control; group leader and supervisor; and test equipment developer.

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[1] APL Study, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, 1975. by Norvell Northcutt.

Service-industry related jobs reported by twenty-two percent of the the group include persons who own their own or participate in the management of small businesses. Included in this job group are such positions as department manager, Montgomery Wards; office manager, life insurance company; trailer court owner/operator; manager, IGA grocery store; assistant manager, luncheonette; and a lady dairy farmer.

In the mechanical category of jobs, graduates include an auto body mechanic, a construction engineer, chief water plant operator, and a TV studio videotape engineer.

Clerical-office workers are represented in such jobs as clerk-typists and expense and report clerk.

The prisons/corrections area of work includes graduates of the external diploma program who work as correction officers, a sergeant-deputy sheriff, and a chief investigator, Sheriff's office.

CONCLUSION: As a group, then, the first fifty graduates work in a variety of jobs in which they meet and serve the public, own and operate their own businesses, and contribute to their own and others welfare. In fact, only two at the time of this study were unemployed by virtue of having been laid off in the recent economic depression, and only three women reported that they "had not worked ouside the home at all, yet".

Job stability is another dimension by which to describe this group. Thirty-eight percent of the sample have worked at their present place of employment from three to eight years, while sixteen percent have been employed at the same site for twenty to twenty-nine years. Years of employment at the same site are listed in Appendix D.

While job stability may be valued by a great majority of the population and can be construed by some as a measure of success, an opposite conclusion could also be true. The lack of a diploma may have caught these people for years in jobs from which they have not been able to escape because of their lack of credential. Unfortunately, the data does not concretely affirm this speculation. However, these persons have exposed themselves to a possible risk and failure in a test situation and have committed considerable time and energy to the assessment of their skills in both academic and vocational competence. Their goal has been to obtain the high school diploma which most of them view as the necessary key to better jobs and more education. This evidence lends support to the later inference that job stability for many has been a millstone, not a milestone, in their work lives.

4. How Have They Fared Economically?

How have these graduates fared economically without a high school diploma? Unfortunately, the data on family income are incomplete. There are also difficulties in interpreting the category "family income" because the form used to collect the data does not ask who in the family, or how many persons contribute to family income. Twenty-eight percent of those asked indicate family income is between $8,000 and $15,000 a year, while fourteen percent report incomes from $15,000 to over $20,000 a year.

CONCLUSION: The data give evidence that for some of this group, economic factors are not the prime motivator in earning a diploma; instead it is another goal, such as more education or training in the same or a different field. The psychological motivators of increased self-esteem

and self-satisfaction cannot be ignored. They are perhaps among the most important benefits for these mature persons who have lived with self-doubt about their own competence throughout their lifetimes. The fact that the actual length of their lifetime ranges from eighteen to over sixty does not diminish the pain nor the psychological damage that years of feeling like a failure etch in a personality. Such personal feelings of failure and inadequacy hurt as much at twenty years old as at sixty. And the amount of money earned by a person suffering such feelings is inadequate balm for that hurt.

5. What Do They Do With Their Leisure Time?

Community Activities. Another dimension which helps us draw a clearer picture of the graduates is their contribution to community life through participation in community activities. Substantially more than half the group cited participation in a long list of activities and organizations in which many had served or presently do serve as officers as well as members. The list includes participation in such activities as:

-- Church. As Sunday school teacher, members of the choir, vestry, fellowship clubs and other youth work.

-- Educational. As members of the school board and parents' groups.

-- Political. As members of the village board, the town council, as campaign manager for the mayor, town clerk and nominee for road supervisor.

-- Job-Related. In professional groups, as secretary to the union.

-- Voluntary Services. As volunteer ambulance drivers and firemen, as well as workers for drives such as Easter Seal.

-- Youth Work. As leaders in 4-H, scouting and as foster parents.

-- Clubs. As members of fraternal organizations, sports teams, senior citizens, such as the Salvation Army or the singing toastmasters.

Learning Activities. Many of the graduates have engaged in learning experiences of a formal or informal nature. Client data forms, which may not have been filled in completely, reveal that thirty-eight of the group have taken a total of thirty-six different courses. Categories of learning experiences cited by the group include the following kinds of courses.

-- College. At community and four-year schools, in courses such as clerical skills and general studies.

-- Job-Related or Job-Sponsored. In teacher in-service, police academies, management training, and specialized skills areas such as automotive repair and switchboard operation.

-- Adult Education. Attending evening schools or BOCES, such subjects as academic English, math and history as well as plumbing, office management, and computer programming.

-- Proprietary. In business schools, beauty schools, modeling schools, such courses as typing and cosmetology.

-- Correspondence. By mail, subjects such as TV repair, electronics, and preparation for the GED.

-- Manpower Training. In federally-sponsored programs in clerical skills.

-- Health Services. Through first aid and civil defense, first aid courses and nurses aide training.

CONCLUSION: This array of learning experience is impressive, particularly when studies[1] indicate that it is the credentialed middle class that most often takes advantage of learning opportunities in the community. Perhaps this group of fifty persons is exceptional only in that they had not completed their formal schooling for a variety of reasons. It cannot be inferred that as a group they were academic under-achievers.

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1 Cornell Continuing Education Study

Certainly they do not fit the stereotype of typical dropouts, yet they exist on school records, somewhere, as school failures and they have not forgotten that.

6. Why Do They Want a High School Diploma Now?

There are many answers to this question, and many graduates give several as they describe the reasons that motivated them to explore the external alternative, make the decision to meet the requirements and proceed to successfully demonstrate their competence.

There are external and internal reasons offered as explanations. Some of the external reasons are economic: to increase income, to respond to pressure to upgrade jobs, or to meet licensing requirements. Some are internal and pshychological: the need for increased self-esteem, or a promise made long ago to a parent who has since died. For some, it is a piece of life's business left unfinished—a nagging reminder of a personal failure.

The prevailing notion that having a high school diploma ensures a better job, whether myth or reality in these economic times, still motivates many. The opportunity to obtain a better paying job is a common reason given by those who seek the diploma. Other job-related reasons for pursuing the diploma cited by the graduates are: to become eligible for promotion or advancement, to get a more satisfying job, and to have job mobility. For those few who have not worked at paid jobs, their goal is to get a job or to ensure future employability. For some who have been employed at their jobs for years, new regulations force them to gain the credential in order to keep their present positions. In such cases,

there is no question of their competence on the job; the rules of the game have changed. Job competence is no longer enough; a high school credential is essential. The legality of this particular strategy is being challenged in many courts.[1] However, most breadwinners cannot initiate costly court actions to prove their case. The choice is clear, get a diploma or be replaced.

Surely these job-related reasons for gaining the credential would seem the key motivation if one were given to idle speculation about why a mature person might seek an external high school diploma. The rather startling truth of the research is that almost a third of the sample seek the external diploma in order to go on to college. More education and/or training is very much a part of their life's plan, as can be observed by a review of their goals for further education. Social work, police science, United States Navy Chaplain training and FBI school are examples of future learning objectives for these persons, in whose lives a diploma earned in an external fashion is a critical or key step.

Some cite a wish to change their careers, others licensing requirements necessary to advance on their present jobs, while others cite self-satisfaction as a valid reason to meet diploma requirements. And in an age when dropping out of high school has become an epidemic, some cite the need to set an example for their own children.

CONCLUSION: In summary, there are few persons who have completed the program who view this academic milestone as a terminal objective in their lives as learners; instead they see it as a means to a more advanced learning goal. The combination of reasons for earning a diploma is expressed

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[1] Huff, Shiela, "Credentialing by Tests or by Degrees: Title VII of the Rights Act and Griggs v. Duke Power Company, "Harvard Educational Review, Vol.44, No.2, May 1974.

by one sixty-one year old graduate who said "It was something I wanted to do before I died—and besides, I want to take some courses at the Community college!".

SECTION II

REACTIONS OF FIFTY ADULT LEARNERS TO A COMPETENCY-BASED, LIFE SKILLS, APPLIED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Abstract

Section I of this report portrays several dimensions of a group of fifty adult learners who had one experience in common. They had all earned their high school diplomas through the external assessment system of the New York State External High School Diploma Program.

Section II of this report will describe the detailed reactions of these persons to the tests which enabled them to demonstrate their competence successfully through applied performance testing and earn their diploma. Information is included on the learners' perceptions of both the content of the tests (life skills competencies) and the process of assessment (take-home tasks, oral and performance interviews).

Of particular interest to adult educators are the learning strategies, problem-solving approaches and the resources used by these learners as they proceeded through the external assessment system. Comments are included on those persons who assisted the candidates; the learning consultants, the tutors, the assessors, and the families and friends who played vital supportive roles in the assessment process. The report includes suggestions for improvement of the program from a group well qualified to offer remarks on its worth, the graduates themselves. Finally, the graduates express their ambitions and goals for the future, now that they have received their much cherished diplomas.

A. Introduction

The New York State External High School Diploma Program was conceived and designed as a testing alternative for adults which would be responsive to their needs and to take into consideration their responsibilities as adults. It was anticipated that many potential candidates would lack testing confidence, be sensitive to and bored with testing that was not relevant to adult concerns, and be busy managing full-time jobs and families. The challenge was to develop a testing program that would test adults with dignity, and ratify their learnings with a diploma. A brief description of the testing program follows:

Design of Assessment Components

A new assessment program offering adults an alternative system of demonstrating real-life competencies in practical settings was the goal of the assessment design effort. A battery of standardized instruments, normed on youngsters in high school classes, obviously would not produce the sought for alternatives nor the opportunity to apply the competencies to the practical problems faced by adults.

Therefore, the assessment team developed a new assessment system with the following objectives:

1. To give some control over the testing environment to the candidates. This was accomplished by designing the process of diagnosis and assessment to be initiated on demand by the candidates and self-paced.
2. To make the assessment process a learning experience. Thus, candidates are fully informed of requirements and their performances at each step. The testing process emphasizes synthesizing

and application, rather than simply knowledge and comprehension.

3. To relate assessment in form and content to the concerns of adults. The content, therefore, consists of projects based on the practical developmental tasks of adulthood (changing residence, applying for a job, consumer awareness, caring for family and personal health). These projects are performed as take-home simulations and as oral interviews. This process permits flexible scheduling for completing the work.
4. To make the testing process humane. Thus, the procedure is individualized, allowing candidates to assume much responsibility while providing them with continuous feedback and success experiences.

Assessment of Generalized Competencies

The assessment team developed five assessment instruments or tasks for the assessment of the 64 Generalized Competencies required for graduation from the program. Each task provides a framework within which the candidates demonstrate a variety of generalized competencies in fulfillment of requirements for the diploma program.

A brief description of the five tasks follows:

Task I: Change of Residence. This task of selecting a new apartment through the want-ad section of the newspaper provides an opportunity for the demonstration of many widely-used competencies. Computation, measurement, reading, writing, map skills are tested.

Task II: Personal and Family Health. An oral interview by a public health nurse, using a structured checklist, elicits competencies in personal and family health and safety.

Task III: Occupational Preparedness. Job seeking skills are demonstrated through such activities as comparing and classifying jobs advertised in newspapers, writing a resume and letters of application for jobs, and identifying payroll deductions.

Task IV: Performance Interview. A trained assessor poses problems in measurement, conversion, map skills and in listening and viewing. A writing exercise on the topic, "Why I Need a High School Diploma," becomes the basis for a semi-structured conversation concerning the student's values, needs and goals.

Task V: Consumer Awareness. This task is focused on applying problem-solving skills to consumer purchases. The candidate is required to demonstrate reasoning, reading and writing skills as they are related to good consumer practices.

This combination of three take-home projects and two oral assignments provides the opportunity for demonstration of the 64 competencies deemed as minimum requirements in computation, communication, and other Life Skills. Successful performance of these competencies is required of all students. The tasks are not sequential and can be performed in any order.

Assessment of Individualized Competencies

In addition to demonstrating a common set of minimum Generalized Competencies, each candidate must also prove possession of advanced competencies in an area of his or her choice.

There are at present three areas in which students may request to complete assessments in Individualized Competencies. This allows wide choice for students, as they must meet requirements in only one of the three possible areas and within each area there are choices to be made. The areas are:

-- Occupational/Vocational

-- Advanced Academic (for college preparation)

-- Advanced Specialized Competencies

Each area identified within the Individualized Competencies presents a need for a different assessment technique.

To summarize, the assessment system has seven unique features which differentiate it from standardized testing procedures:

1. Flexibility in the assessment system
2. Open information on requirements
3. Broad skills and knowledge tested
4. Variety of communication modes used
5. Flexibility of assessment choice
6. Continuous feedback
7. Unlimited opportunities to demonstrate competencies

These features are the basis for test construction in the program. The field test has been the effort to explore both the administrative feasibility of such a program and its reception by the adult population who are to be its users.

In order to evaluate individual reactions to the testing program, an extensive survey questionnaire was designed in March 1975. The questionnaire

is administered by a trained member of the assessment staff during an interview to persons who have received their diplomas through the program. They are paid $5 consulting fee for the interview, which typically lasts between an hour and an hour and a quarter. The following information has been summarized from interviews with the first fifty graduates of the program. These interviews were held within a time period of about seven months, from March to October 1975.

The objectives of the interviews are to answer key questions about the success of the program in achieving its goal: the development and operation of a humane testing system designed for adults. Therefore, the questions asked deal with:

-- the nature of the test content and process

-- the attitudes and feelings to such a unique testing mode

-- the learning strategies and resources used by the candidates to meet the requirements of the assessment system

The information gathered will be used as a guideline for revision and refinement as the program developers seek to expand the demonstration and anticipate transferability and adoption on a state-wide basis.

B. Perceptions of An Open Testing Program

1. Flexibility in the Assessment System

The first series of questions asked by the interviewer related to the flexibility of testing in time and location. The system's self-paced characteristic provides the opportunity for busy adults with heavy responsibilities to establish some of the conditions of testing; i.e., to take three of the tests or tasks home for a period of one week. Also, it is possible for them to schedule the two interviews at their convenience.

Take-Home Feature. Ninety-six percent, of the persons, when asked whether they liked this testing feature replied "yes". Only two individuals indicated "no opinion" to this question or indicated that it made no difference whether tasks were completed at home or at the assessment office.

Overwhelmingly, the major reason given for liking to take the tasks home related to time -- time to do tasks at their leisure, to sandwich the work between family, jobs and community activities, to work in the middle of the night, or in the early morning before families arose, or on weekends when demands were lighter. Others mentioned the lack of pressure home testing involved, the ability to work at one's own speed and the convenience of resources at hand. The psychological safety and familiarity of the home atmosphere appealed to many, as well as the opportunity to think about a task, research resources, try several possible answers, put the task aside, and pick it up again at a later time with a new insight. Several commented that doing the tasks was "fun, a chance to look for answers--do research", or "an opportunity to do and learn new things."

Typical explanations given against working on the tasks in the RLS office were concerned mostly with the atmosphere which was perceived as probably being more "nerve wracking" with distractions of noise, the awareness of persons around, the inconvenience of coming to the office, and an increased consciousness of time. The atmosphere might make persons feel more hurried, harried and pressured. Also, the office was cited as probably lacking in the proper resources to complete the tasks.

Clarity of Directions. In order for take-home tasks to be an efficient administrative process for both the learner and the assessment center and staff, clarity of directions is an absolute necessity. The original pre-test of the three take-home tasks involved rewriting of these tasks after each use by paid subjects. In one instance, Task I, which was the staff's first effort at writing an integrated adult-oriented simulation that would elicit many basic required competencies in a coherent organized fashion, was rewritten 14 times! Staff proficiency at writing tasks improved tremendously with practice, and according to reactions of the graduates, the time taken to make instructions clear was well spent. Sixty-two percent answered that the directions were clear, while 36 percent indicated they were "clear, with few exceptions." Only one person out of fifty answered that the directions were not clear. In noting the nature of the qualified replies of "clear, with few exceptions", the difficulties involved mostly procedural matters or directions that were read incorrectly, or misinterpreted, although in some cases, ambiguity of directions was the case.

In answer to the question, "Who helped you if the directions were not clear?", most had turned to the assessment staff as they had been instructed. Other persons used to clarify instructions were learning consultants, friends or relatives. Other resources, such as the dictionary, were also used. Most who received help in clarifying directions sought help from more than one source. For 62 percent, however, there was no need for any help in clarifying the instructions.

The Counseling of Learners. Because the nature of this program is unlike standardized testing programs, a counseling step has been considered an essential part of the assessment process. Counseling has several objectives: (1) to clarify all alternative routes to a high school diploma available in New York State, (2) to assist individuals in making the appropriate choice of a diploma program based on their needs, (3) to explain the external diploma program, if that be the appropriate goal of the learner, (4) to administer tests in the diagnostic phase, (5) to assist in locating learning experiences and resources if need be, and (6) to act in a supportive manner throughout the assessment process.

Counseling is provided by learning consultants of RLS whose role in the external diploma program is to assist in the decision-making process, administer diagnostic testing, and maintain a relationship with the candidates as they proceed through final assessment. A learning consultant is not a tutor, or a teacher in this program, as the role has been designed. So it is important for program transferability to identify more clearly exactly how, in practice, the learning consultants are perceived by the learners.

The question was asked, "Do you think a friend of yours could go through the program without a learning consultant?" Fifty-six percent of the group replied either "no" or "no, with reservations." Sample comments of this group follow:

> "No, [you] have to have someone to explain, as a backbone for trouble."
>
> "No, you need LC to get you started on the right track, or to call if you have problems."

"[You] need LC for support and encouragement"

"No, you have to be able to have someone to call when you need help. Knowing someone's there makes a difference."

"No, there's a lot to do besides paper work -- the LC puts it all together."

Forty-four percent of the group answered "yes" or "yes, with reservations" to the same question regarding whether a person could work through the program without a learning consultant. Some of these responses are noted below:

"To begin with, you need the LC, then you don't anymore."

"[You] could get by, but would eliminate rapport. LC should be more than someone who clarifies about tests. Need someone to motivate, can be demanding of student in terms of goals, future. Need for the human aspect."

"I could have done without the LC if I had someone to call [to ask directions]."

"Yes, but probably not as easy and more time-consuming -- but could be done."

"Depends on person; some could do it alone, others couldn't."

In an attempt to discover when the learning consultant is most necessary, the question was asked, "When was your learning consultant most useful?" Persons often gave several answers. Forty percent responded "at the beginning, when [I was] deciding on a diploma route", 32 percent mentioned that the learning consultant was "supportive throughout the process." Only one person mentioned the LC as particularly important during the final assessment stage, and one person mentioned that the learning consultant failed to keep in touch. Two persons mentioned learning consultants' importance in identifying learning or tutoring experiences.

In summary, if assessment is viewed as three stages with a "beginning" (decision-making and diagnostic tests), a "middle" (learning phase), and an "end" (final assessment), 72 percent perceive the LC as most useful "in the beginning" of the process. Thirty-two percent acknowledge the supportive role of the LC throughout the program. The evidence seems to affirm a need for a counseling step as part of the assessment procedure, as well as a support mechanism during the entire program.

Help In Completing Tasks. Since an objective of the take-home testing program is that it be a learning experience shared with family and friends, it is anticipated that learners will seek help in completing the tasks. Documentation of this "ripple effect" was noted in the variety of replies to the question, "Who helped you with the task?" Forty percent reported help from others. Spouses were most often mentioned as helpers; children, friends, co-workers and learning consultants were mentioned less frequently. Fifty-two percent of those asked responded that they did not rely on anyone but themselves to complete the tasks.

The nature of the help received from spouses, friends and co-workers took the form of conversations about the project, or aid in locating reference materials. In several instances, where husband-and-wife teams were completing requirements, they assisted each other by discussing the material together, and by quizzing each other on certain of the competencies.

Resources Used. The flexibility in time and location of testing offers learners the opportunity to search out their own helpful resources in a fashion not possible in a standardized test situation. As each of the take-home tasks is designed as a simulation of an adult decision-making or

problem-solving exercise, it is also intended that tasks are to stimulate the learner to locate needed resources much as they might refer to them in a non-testing problem-solving situation, when confronted with a similar problem in real life. The variety of resources used by the learners is listed below with the frequency of their use noted:

Type of Resource Used	Frequency of Use
1) Newspapers	50
2) Telephone	50
3) Telephone book	33
4) Magazines	32
5) Ruler	24
6) Dictionary	22
7) Map	17
8) Encyclopedia	11
9) Books on consumer awareness	10
10) Measuring cup	9
11) Catalog	8
12) Better Business Bureau	8
13) Public library	7
14) Directory	4
15) Atlas	4
16) Pennysaver	3
17) Banks	3
18) CAPCO (consumer agency)	3
19) Field trips	3
20) Tape recorder	2
21) Chamber of Commerce	2
22) TV ads	2
23) Medical society	1
24) Salvation Army	1
25) County Clerk's office	1
26) Cooperative Extension	1
27) Loan company	1
28) Almanac	1
29) Graph	1
30) Scissors/glue	1
31) Calculator	1

It is a fact that several of the tasks force use of a particular resource; i.e., newpapers, the telephone book, and maps, so that there is no question about their having been used. It is assumed that this list

is not exhaustive, and that, in fact, other resources might have been used that were not mentioned to the interviewer. However, it is evident that this list substantiates the original premise of the initial proposal that learning opportunities and resources are available in the community. Resources were found in the home or borrowed, found within the community, and in some few instances (a ruler, a city map), were purchased. It is inferred from this information that the cost of "learning" must be low.

Notably, the list is also a measure of these learners' ingenuity and persistance in locating appropriate resources when faced with a particular problem-solving situation. A most important question arises: Is there evidence that these information-seeking skills transfer to other life situations which are not part of the testing? This question will be answered later in this report.

Sixty-six percent of the graduates reported no trouble getting necessary information or materials to do the tasks at home while 34 percent reported some difficulty in locating either information or materials.

Some of the difficulties cited by those who noted problems were related to the lack of resources or to less variety of resources available in the more rural parts of the demonstration region. It is possible that newspapers in the more rural regions do not offer the variety of classified ads necessary to fulfill the requirements of Task III which call for the comparison of six job categories from the classified ads. Also, the rural areas might not be serviced by such agencies as the Better Business Bureau.

Learning Strategies. Sixty-six percent of the graduates reported no trouble in getting necessary information or materials to do the tasks at home. Their responses did indicate some of the varied strategies they used to get particular information. For example, one individual stated, "I had no real trouble getting answers or materials, but I needed to decide how to deal with responses of people when I phoned. I worked out my own approach so it felt comfortable [to telephone for information]." Another said, "I had some trouble getting answers on the phone so I went in person for the credit information."

Several persons noted that for Task I (a simulation about locating a new residence), they drove around in their cars looking for a residential location that suited their needs, and identified the community resources nearby.

Cooperative learning was noted by many of those interviewed. One husband and wife team who worked together on the requirements noted that they had tape recorded certain information which they needed to remember and played it as they drove in their car! Others report involving their children in the learning activities, particularly in preparing for the health interview. Health pamphlets have been taken to school for "show and tell" time.

Another learner spoke of experimenting in his kitchen with a measuring cup he had purchased, noting the different effects of measuring liquids, such as water, and solids, such as sugar.

CONCLUSION: The external diploma assessment system is characterized by much flexibility, all of it designed to adjust the testing to the lives

of the adults engaged in the program. The take-home tasks are an extremely popular feature of the assessment system for a variety of reasons. Adult learners in this program, with many demands on their time, overwhelmingly favor this method of testing.

The take-home test directions, although clear for the most part, still retain some ambiguities. Further revisions in the instructions must be an important consideration in the monitoring of this external assessment system.

Counseling for the learners in the program is provided by the RLS learning consultants. It is viewed as an important step in assessment, particularly at the beginning of the process. The staff is exploring methods of providing counseling help through media presentations as well as through personal contact with learning consultants.

Regarding others who have helped learners in the assessment process, the data is clear. A majority of the sample of learners do report seeking some kind of aid or help from other persons in completing the take-home tasks. This outcome is an anticipated one and one that has certain benefits in terms of the ripple effects of learnings by persons other than those meeting requirements for the diploma.

For the most part, graduates did not have difficulty locating materials or resources. However, in rural areas where it must be assumed that resources are not as varied, candidates should be directed to use of a newspaper from a larger city. The paucity of agencies in rural areas (such as the Better Business Bureau) might force an assessor for the diploma program to suggest some local alternative which might fulfill a similar

function for that community. This information supports the idea of employing community-based assessors with a good knowledge of the resources used by the local population.

The flexibility of time and location of testing seems to have provided these adults with an opportunity to involve themselves in some real learning experiences. They have been successful in locating useful reference tools in their environment and have developed learning strategies to solve the problems which the simulations present.

Given the opportunity to control some of the conditions of testing, these adults have developed their skills as independent learners, a competency which will benefit them in their daily lives as well as giving them a tremendous psychological boost.

2. Open Information on Requirements

A vital step in the assessment system is the preliminary diagnostic step which occurs after a learner has made a commitment to pursue the external diploma requirements. A preliminary diagnostic step includes testing in reading, writing and computation, and aids both the learner and the assessment staff in determining which competencies are possessed by the learner and to what degree. The most comprehensive instrument used in this step is called the Self-Assessment Checklist. It lists and gives examples of the 64 Generalized Competencies which must be demonstrated in the program, and is used as a self-rating tool by the program participants. Self-rating of competencies is considered both a valid and desirable feature of assessment. In providing an exploration of competencies which are

expected and it prepares learners for the demands of the final assessment. Used as a counseling tool by the learning consultant and learner, it is the basis for identification of skills strengths and weaknesses, as well as a prescription for needed learning experiences or review. Kept at home, it remains with the learners as a reminder of the nature of each area in which they must demonstrate competence.

Seventy-eight percent of the group felt encouraged about how much they knew after having experienced diagnostic testing; only 6 percent reported they felt discouraged about their level of competence after the diagnostic step. Sixteen percent professed mixed feelings -- some encouragement, some discouragement -- with their skill level. Most felt the diagnostic testing important in helping them to prepare for final testing. Some note that this step helped clarify what was expected of them; others felt their strengths and weaknesses had been accurately identified. Seven persons felt the diagnostic step didn't particularly help them, four persons didn't understand what the diagnostic testing was for, but only one person remarked that the step had "hurt". Most people reported they were "surprised at myself, at what I knew" and delighted. One person remarked that "I rated myself high [on the self-assessment] and thought I could accomplish what was required. Then the tasks required more than I expected. I actually had to do things and hadn't realized that would be so. There is a difference between 'could you do it?' and doing it -- they're two different matters. But it all came out OK."

CONCLUSION: The diagnostic step accomplishes several purposes in the program. It makes explicit the competencies which must be demonstrated,

it serves as a self-rating instrument for the learner's strengths and weaknesses, and for many, acts as a psychological boost in helping them articulate learnings they already possess, regardless of the origin of the learning.

3. Broad Skills and Knowledge Tested

The use of simulations and oral interview testing methods enable emphasis on cognitive skills of synthesis, analysis and much emphasis on process skills such as data gathering, decision-making, and organizational skills. The content of the tests, problems that adults face (i.e., hunting for a residence, a job, consumer purchasing) are the contexts in which the skills are demonstrated. It was hoped that the context would be familiar enough that learners could associate and use past experiences as a basis for solving the tasks.

Competencies Known Prior to Testing. In response to the question, "What competencies did you already know?", 42 percent answered "most or all". The graduates' perception of where learning of competencies already known had occurred was identified with the question, "How and where did you learn the competencies you already knew?" As might be expected, a variety of sources were cited. Their sources and the frequency are listed below:

Perceived Source of Learning of Known Competencies

Source	Frequency Mentioned	Percent Mentioned
"from life"/"trial-and-error"/ "in the street"/"from experience"	43	86
School	23	46
Working	17	24
From parents, relatives	7	14
Reading	7	14
"Parenting"/having responsibility	4	8
Community work/volunteering	3	6
GED study	1	2
Armed Service	1	2

Some comments about perceived sources of learning of adult competencies follow:

> "By living and by watching mother and father--and from school [reading and writing] but not too much in school that sets you for life."
>
> "By working, through children, and experience (the best teacher)"
>
> "trial-and-error, and hard knocks!"
>
> "throughout life, growing up on farm, from relatives, the service."
>
> "from different jobs I've had, being in business, dealing with the public, being a father, having a family and responsibility"
>
> "through my involvement with youth, counseling, schools, [work with] mentally retarded, and first aid courses"

Before demonstration of competencies on tasks, 58 percent of persons felt the need for some review or, in some instances, for a learning experience, whether informal or formal. The two areas which were mentioned most

frequently for review or learning were the areas of math and health. Finding area and percentage were mentioned most often as having to be reviewed or learned. In communications, writing (of an organized paragraph, a resume, a letter of application) were mentioned by nine persons as areas to be reviewed. Reading skills were mentioned by only one respondent as an area which had to be reviewed or learned. This is a finding of importance to the study, for it identifies the group as perceiving themselves able to read materials from adult life. In other words, the group on the whole did not have reading difficulties. Use of maps, locating community resources, and graph reading were mentioned by several persons as needing review. Evidently the need to review certain areas did not appear as an insurmountable difficulty for persons because they learned whatever was indicated for them to learn.

But, how did they learn those competencies rated as "weak" on the self-assessment checklist used in diagnostic testing? Again, a variety of sources were noted including formal and informal learning experiences. Some sources were identified by their learning consultants but their total role in locating resources was small. Most were located by the learners themselves as they learned or reviewed competencies in which they were weak. Sources used by those who needed learning are listed below:

Sources of Learning for Unknown Competencies

Source	Frequency Mentioned	Percent Mentioned
Own research	12	24
Learning consultant	9	18
From spouse	7	14
Books	7	14
RLS packets	6	12
Library	5	10

Sources of Learning for Unknown Competencies

Tutor	5	10
Son/daughter	4	8
Newspaper	3	6
Magazines	2	4
Dictionary	1	2
Bank	1	2
Encyclopedia	1	2

For those who needed help in locating learning, RLS provided some services. For RLS, aiding learners means several things: (1) identifying, through diagnostic testing, specific competencies which must be learned, (2) identifying tutors who have been familiarized with program requirements by RLS staff, and (3) referring learners to agencies or learning resources in the community, and (4) in some instances, teaching of specific competencies.

Eighty-two percent of the group report using no tutor. The numbers of persons who have used paid tutors is 9 or 18 percent of the group. The fees paid for tutoring ranged from nothing to $7 an hour. The length of time needed for a tutor ranged from several hours to several weeks to four-to-six-months (in two instances). While tutors have not seen the tasks, they have been briefed on the competencies and are aware of the unique nature of the competency testing. Data is scanty on the type of teaching that occurred during these tutoring sessions; however, the few persons who employed them relate good experiences with the tutors who "knew what I needed to know." By contrast an individual who took the GED examinations remarked, "when I went to night school, the teacher had never seen the equivalency exam, so the teaching didn't really relate to the exam." The explicitness of the diagnostic step as well as the explicitness of the competencies themselves aids in focusing on a specific learning task. It

would seem that having direct information on what has to be learned is an encouragement, not a detriment, to learning.

Comments about the independent learning strategies used to learn competencies follow:

"[I] learned by asking questions and reading up on my own."

"[I] went over [material] with my wife (mostly math)."

"[I learned] area, and some other math, from my daughters."

"studied math book from school, 9th grade general math."

"I practiced at home."

"from the RLS examples"

"from the tutor; went and got information I didn't know."

"LC helped through advice and problems received from LC -- LC gave math problems -- had to do them until I got them right."

It must be noted, that although the role of learning consultant is specifically guidance and counseling in theory, in practice teaching occurs. Occasionally a learning consultant, while explaining an error to a client, becomes involved in what might be called a "teaching encounter." However, active teaching by LCs is discouraged by the assessment staff.

Relationship of Tasks to Adult Life. When asked, "How did the tasks relate to things you do as an adult?", 92 percent replied that they were "the same, or closely related to everyday life." Four persons replied that the tasks included areas that "everybody should know." Comments to this question include responses such as:

"Most is stuff you should know if you're going to live."

"Whole thing about everyday life."

"Related to what I do as a parent and on my job as teacher's aide."

"Don't know too many men who use measuring cups or grocery shop or read ads about furniture -- but they should!"

Learning Outcome of Testing. For many, the testing was an instructive process, as was intended in the test design. Both specific facts and study skills were mentioned as outcomes of the testing program. Information or facts most frequently learned were reported in the area of health (20%), resources (16%), writing skills (41%), legal information (8%), and consumer practices (8%). Comments related to learning which were outcomes of the testing are quoted below:

"Made me realize health is important -- should take time for myself, mental as well as physical."

"Didn't know how to write resume, applications. After I read the task, I worked on it with my husband."

"New ways to think about music."

"More aware about shopping -- would think about comparing before buying."

"Learned about communities and resources -- where I might like to live."

"Learned that [I] challenge some of the things in this test and in lots of educational programs."

Independent study skills were also recognized and mentioned as learnings by those interviewed. The skill of "gathering information" was most often cited (18%) as well as how to "regulate and set aside time to work" (16%), "self-discipline" (10%), and "organizing skills" (8%). Others cited the ability to "be careful (in doing work)", "answer clearly and thoroughly", "confidence in coping", "to concentrate", and how to "use the phone."

When asked the question, "Will you, or have you utilized any of this new information or skills in your daily life or on your job?", 88 percent indicated they had already utilized or would soon utilize some of the new skills and learnings they had acquired. Only 12 percent stated they felt no specific change in their use of information or skills as a result of testing. These persons remarked they "already used" the information and skills in their lives before participating in the program. Comments on how learnings are being applied follow:

> "using math to measure tile for bedroom and kitchen (will save some money); taught my husband not to buy the first thing [he] sees."
>
> "[I] lost 32 pounds after preparing for health [interview]. Also used job search information [while] looking into a new job."
>
> "[I] use math now -- figure out paycheck to see if I'm short-changed."
>
> "learned to take my time -- an approach. [I] plan phone calls now, how I should ask questions."
>
> "taught my wife first aid -- I shared the health stuff with her. Son recently fell off roof, knocked self out. Wife kept her cool, banged on [his] chest. He'd come to by the time [I] got there!"
>
> "will use research process -- gathering data, locating resources."
>
> "others using what I learned because [I] am able to make referrals on job (works at unemployment office) from information gathered for tasks so I can help others."
>
> "not as afraid to talk on the phone -- [I] have to do more of it on job -- got used to it (through doing tasks)."

Suggestions for Revision of Competencies. Input from the graduates was solicited during the interview to determine what additional competencies should be added to the program. Sixty-four percent of respondents felt that no additional competencies should be added. However, at least 14 persons

had suggestions of areas that might well be included or required in more depth. The following list summarizes their suggestions:

Additional Competencies Suggested by Graduates	Number of Times Suggested
Proper English usage, punctuation and spelling	4
Proper speech	1
Marriage preparation	1
Personal appearance and body care	1
More first aid	1
Defensive driving	1
More math, including metric	1
More reading -- aloud	1
How to job interview	1
More on interpersonal relations -- how to deal with kids	1
Contributions to community	1
Will making	1
Insurance/savings	1
Warranties and service contracts	1
Income tax	1
Home mortgaging -- how to buy a house	1

When asked, "What competencies should be omitted from the program?", more than 40 percent suggested "nothing" should be omitted. There were suggestions for areas to be omitted. They included:

	Number of Times Suggested
Attend a live performance requirement	4
Music	2
Cartoon (a bad choice)	2

	Number of Times Suggested
Too much on comparison shopping	1
Too oriented to Syracuse area	1
Too much asked on job seeking	1

CONCLUSION: It seems evident from the testimony of those interviewed that the testing program has successfully met its objective. The process of testing has elicited skills already possessed as well as generated new learnings. Transfer of information and of learning skills is attested to by many graduates who note that they have applied their new learning already. The relationship between the test content and the reality of adult life is affirmed. The demonstration provides sufficient data to conclude that testing related to the concerns of adult life results in more learning and increased performance on the part of adult learners.

The suggestions made for the inclusion of new competency areas as well as the suggestions for omitting competency areas will be considered as the program is refined and revised based on experience.

4. Variety of Communication Modes

The take-home projects require presentation of the student's work in written form, while the two oral performance interviews encourage persons who may feel more comfortable in expressing themselves and what they know through speech. The oral performance interviews were anticipated to be a new testing experience for many adults, and their reactions to it were very favorable.

Both oral interviews have preparation packets mailed to the learners which aid them in preparing for the interviews. This material is viewed as both review material and instructional, in the sense that it provides the learners with a clear idea of what will be asked and some suggestions for home practice prior to the interviews. Several questions were asked about preparation for the oral interviews.

Preparation for Oral Tasks. The two tasks which are tested orally have preparation packets which act as review or instructional materials, depending upon the learner's needs. The health packet is a colorful collection of public health pamphlets printed by various sources and all but two are available to RLS free. The performance interview packet was developed by the assessment staff to inform learners of the material included in the oral interviews.

Most persons report at least scanning these materials, while some reported actually studying or practicing with the material at home. When asked the question, "how did you prepare for the oral tasks?", most cited using the materials with family members, or friends, and discussing the content. Others combined RLS provided materials with texts on health from first aid courses or Boy Scout manuals that were available to them and studied both. Several cited that the health information was material they already knew from their jobs as nurse's aide, volunteer work as firemen, or first aid courses. One person, confessing that he "didn't like to read," stated "the only time I read is when it's interesting, and that was interesting!"

All persons asked "Did the pamphlets help in preparing you?" responded "yes", and indicated they had read all or part of the material mailed to

them. Only one person answered "yes" when asked if the reading had been difficult; all others (98%) responded "no" to this question. One respondent noted that her daughter had taken the health brochures to school and that her eight and nine-year-olds were reading them too!

Performance As a Testing Mode. When asked if persons liked being able to talk as well as write in a test, 76 percent replied "yes", 6 percent indicated they would prefer to write, 6 percent indicated they would like to do both; 8 percent felt it was "good to have to talk", 4 percent had no preference for one mode or the other.

Samples of comments about talking as a technique of testing are listed below:

> "[I] liked talking -- It's an interesting way to get things out."
>
> "would rather talk than write and did better on questions [I] had to talk on."
>
> "[I] liked talking, even though not much of a talker. Sometimes could express self better by talking."
>
> "when I was told some was oral, I was frightened, but I found it was easier because [I] was comfortable."
>
> "easier for me, because people can't read my writing"

As part of the performance interview, learners are asked to actually use a measuring cup and a ruler to measure objects as they demonstrate their competency with measuring tools.

Overwhelmingly, learners when asked if they felt that such a performance was a good way to demonstrate their skills, answered "yes". Comments pertaining to the use of tools during the interview included these observations:

"What else do you use in the home -- these are good basic tools."

"How else would you prove you could do it?"

"If a person didn't know how to use them, couldn't do it. So it's proof that you know it. Would have been harder to draw a diagram, for instance."

"good way, because if you didn't know how to use them you would be forced to learn. Everybody should be able to do it."

"You can be more accurate using the right tools than with pencil and paper."

When asked, "Did you have any problem thinking clearly when you had to talk in the interview?", 88 percent said "no", 14 percent said "yes", and qualified this by saying it was "the choice of words" that was sometimes difficult.

"sometimes I know what I want to say, but have trouble putting it in words"

"[I] used to be shy; this helps with that -- diploma program has helped with shyness in general."

"no problem thinking clearly, but sometimes in stating clearly (finding the correct words)."

The individual and family health material is tested orally by a trained nurse. It was felt important to ask learners if they were uncomfortable discussing any particular subject with the assessors. One hundred percent, the entire group, responded "no" to this question. The group commented that there was no discomfort discussing health material, but most agreed that the assessor made them feel "relaxed". Some said they felt "a little timid before-hand wondering how frank they could be, but felt very at ease."

In general, the oral interviews as well as the assessors themselves, were very favorably rated by the learners. When asked, "How did you feel

about the assessors?", and "Was the interview comfortable or uncomfortable and why?", the majority indicated that they felt "great", "terrific", or "good and comfortable" with the assessors. They found the interview situation comfortable for a great many reasons. Samples of responses to these questions support the conclusion that for these adults, oral testing was an excellent technique:

> "[I] felt very comfortable . . . felt free . . . not 'little or dumb'."
>
> "made [me] feel at ease, not 'teacher and pupil', but one-to-one"
>
> "Assessors were wonderful . . . friendly, not 'pushy.' Made [me] feel they were not in a hurry."
>
> "They were good -- friendly . . . made you feel relaxed, especially the nurse . . . so relaxed I almost forgot!"
>
> "Felt good with assessors because when I answered, they let me think."
>
> "feeling relaxed made it easier to think calmly."
>
> "made me feel at ease, no pressure . . . almost forgot it was a test!"

Characteristics of Good Assessors. Because the assessor is the key to the success of oral testing, learners were asked to specify the characteristics of a good assessor by answering the following question, "What makes a good assessor?" Twenty-four categories of descriptive adjectives were listed. The list of personaltiy traits and behaviors thought important for assessors follows:

Response to the Question, "What Makes a Good Assessor?"

	Trait	Frequency of Answer
1)	Understanding of people	13
2)	Ability to communicate clearly	11
3)	Good personality	9
4)	Warmth, friendliness	7
5)	Relaxed, at ease	7
6)	Know their material; have competencies themselves	7
7)	Patience	7
8)	Concerned with you	5
9)	Gets along with people	4
10)	Doesn't rush you	4
11)	Helpful, kind	3
12)	Makes you comfortable	3
13)	Honest, fair, sincere	3
14)	Comfortable with themselves	2
15)	Cooperative	2
16)	Gives confidence	2
17)	Witty, humorous	1
18)	Flexibility	1
19)	Ability to draw out answers	1
20)	Diplomatic	1
21)	Interested in learning	1
22)	Experienced	1
23)	Holds your attention	1
24)	Courteous	1

In an effort to determine how learners perceived the testing process itself, a general question was asked, "How were these tests different than others you have taken?" Again, a variety of responses were tabulated.

Responses to the Question

"How Were Tests Different Than Others You Have Taken?"

	Different Because:	Frequency of Answer
1)	Oral, not just written	17
2)	Subject matter - useful	9
3)	Tests not different	7
4)	Variety of answers possible	5
5)	Attitude of encouragement	3
6)	"Life like"	3

	Different Because:	Frequency of Answer
7)	Tests were clear	3
8)	Individual testing, relaxed	2
9)	No pressure to compete	2
10)	Could look information up	1
11)	Could stop and think	1
12)	Supportive atmosphere	1
13)	Less nerve wracking	1
14)	Little writing	1
15)	Untimed	1

Finally, questions were asked concerning the physical setting and the length of time allowed for the interviews. The setting was rated as comfortable by most, although there was one complaint about lighting. All indicated that there had been enough time allowed to give them ample opportunity to respond.

CONCLUSION: The materials provided for learners to prepare for the oral interview were used without reading difficulty by all but one of the group. The packets were used as review for some who scanned the information, and for studying by others who felt less secure about their knowledge in these areas. The practice tips were the focus of learning experiences in which family members and friends became involved. The evidence supports the usefulness and readability of the materials. As a preparation for the process of an oral interview, the packets seem to act as good advance organizers.

The technique of testing by oral interviews seems to be very successful for this particular group of adults, who found the experience a comfortable one in which to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. Credit must be given to the two assessors who have become highly skilled in this technique. In an individualized program, the warmly supportive, yet business-like atmosphere created by the assessors provides the learners

with an optimal testing situation. This aspect of the program was identified by the learners as the predominate difference between the assessment system and more familiar kinds of written testing. It is a method which should be employed more often in the testing of adults, for it seems to be viewed by them as a positive experience.

5. Flexibility of Assessment

Generalized Competencies. The assessment system is designed to provide flexibility in the demonstration of generalized competencies. Process skills, such as accurate math functions which have only one "right answer" must be answered with 100 percent accuracy. Other competencies, however, have a broad range of acceptable answers, e.g., items which ask for a person to present information about the location, use and comparison of community resources. Items that require documentation or other proofs can be supported in a variety of acceptable forms. The flexibility for demonstration of the 64 generalized competencies is also a feature in the assessment of Individualized competencies.

Individualized Competencies. Program participants can choose an Individualized assessment area from three options; occupational/vocational, advanced academic, or specialized competencies area. Competency in the occupational/vocational domain can be assessed in three different ways; (1) by employer testimony after a year's employment, (2) by performance as judged by a master craftsperson, or (3) by possession of a current New York State license in an appropriate area. Advanced academic competence is assessed by either (1) original work indicating college level, or (2) an acceptable score on a standardized test measuring readiness for college

level work. The advanced specialized competence assessment procedure, designed primarily to enable persons to demonstrate a strong vocational skill, is handled on the basis of judgement by specialists.

Forty-nine of the first fifty graduates chose the occupational/ vocational area as the focus of their Individualized Assessment. Thirty-two persons documented their skills by employer testimony after a years employment at the same job. Sixteen persons chose a performance assessmetn conducted by a master craftsperson. Two persons submitted current New York State licenses in cosmetology as proof of skill. One person elected to demonstrate college readiness by fulfilling requirements for advanced academic preparation.

Employer Testimony. Thirty-two persons were asked questions regarding the process of verification by employer letter. Twenty-six persons felt that this mode of assessment of their skills was a good idea and a fair assessment. Four persons felt it fair but wished they had had the opportunity to review what was written about them by their employers with their employers. One person noted that his employer never mentioned receiving the letter. Only one person of the thirty-two who chose this method felt qualms about asking for documentation from the employer.

The enactment into law of the Buckley Amendment regarding student access to records changed the procedure for this kind of assessment in the month of July 1975. Thus, the program was adjusted in accordance with the law and the confidentiality of the employer letter was eliminated. This action makes it possible for employees to read the letters from their employers submitted as documentation of their skills. It was anticipated that this legislation might inhibit employers from a truthful evaluation of the employees skills but experience to date does not justify this concern. In fact, there is evidence that removing the "confidential"

restriction surrounding these letters has had a salutory effect. Learners report that employers are using this verification step as a basis for an employer-employee counseling session in which they review together job satisfaction and job progress. It would seem then, that this form of assessment can be a constructive experience for all parties involved.

Occupational Performance Tests. Sixteen persons chose to demonstrate their skills through performance tests monitored by specialists in the field. As persons indicated the job area in which they wished to be assessed, RLS staff located appropriate tradespersons to establish entry-level criteria for competency assessment. Specialists actually employed in particular occupations worked with assessment staff to prepare for on-site performance testing, and then carried out the assessments. In each case, the learner, the specialist and a member of the RLS assessment staff were present at the performance test.

List of Performance Tests Developed and Administered

TV Repair	Dairy Farming
Auto Sales and Management	Small Business-Trailer Court
Assistant Manager, Restaurant	Meatcutter
Home Management (chosen by 3)	Grocery Store Management
Machine Operator	Upholstering
Switchboard Operator	Auto Mechanics
Construction Contractor	Modeling

The on-site performance tests were judged as a good way to assess occupational skills by fourteen persons, while two felt it was "good, with reservations". Some comments about the performance assessments are noted below:

(Of Auto Mechanics) "I enjoyed the process. Felt it was a good way having someone [assess one] who knew the skill himself--makes sense."

(Of Meatcutting) "The only way you can really do it [is to show it]."

(Of Switchboard Operations) "It was great -- although the boards were different, the assessor took time"

(Of Home Management) "It was very good, although the equipment in the kitchen was out of date. Perhaps could be set up at some other place?"

(Of Upholstering) "I liked the assessor coming to see the pieces that I had upholstered."

(Of Machine Operations) "I think it was a good way to do it. Took me right into the shop. Only way I could have done a written part would have been drawing diagrams of machines telling what they do."

Fourteen persons, when asked "Was the level of difficulty of the performance test comparable to skills expected of a high school graduate?", replied the tests expected skills demonstrated above that expected from a teenage high school graduate. Responses included these comments:

(Of Restaurant Management) "Average high school student doesn't have the knowledge or skills to handle this business or a comparable situation."

(Of Home Management) "Average kid getting out of high school doesn't have any idea of how to run a house."

(Of TV Repair) "Without experience, a high school graduate could not have answered the questions I did."

(Of Upholstering) "It's not that this is a difficult area, but it requires time, learning, practice and patience -- something which average graduate hasn't done."

One person felt the skills he demonstrated were "the same" as those expected of a current high school graduate, while one felt that the situations were not comparable. When asked, "Should the performance assessment include a written section?", eleven of those asked replied "no", while five replied that a performance test "could include a written part."

As was noted above, two persons submitted current New York State licenses in cosmetology which were accepted as proof of skills in this area. The acceptance of licensing as adequate proof of skills must be judged on the basis of the individual license presented. Investigation of licensing has revealed that persons can, in some cases, obtain and maintain licenses without ever having been employed in a given field. Therefore, documentation by licensure does not always attest to a persons' skills. This fact has led to a program policy of review of the conditions of licensing prior to its acceptance as proof of occupational skills.

Advanced Academic Assessment. To date, the assessment staff has had little experience with the assessment of college readiness through advanced academic assessment. Only one person of the first group of fifty graduates elected this assessment area. The comments of this individual regarding the task, college readiness, shed some light on this assessment process. The learner reported that she felt that the advanced academic tasks were the "hardest part" of the diploma program. She felt it was a good way to demonstrate her skills, and noted that she had to go to the library for information to complete this requirement. She felt that completing standardized tests in math and reading was "a good way to tell what a person knows". Two other requirements of the program require the learner to write an autobiographical sketch and to assemble a "feasibility report" on how she might manage to finance her college program as well as the consideration of other issues related to college attendance, such as time and energy factors and child care. These two program requirements "made me think out how I would manage [going to college]". The autobiographical

sketch "helped me to put my life together, to see where I came from and where I'm going". It is expected that as the program expands, more persons will seek this area of assessment providing more experience with and data on, this kind of assessment.

CONCLUSION: The flexibility of the assessment process allows for a variety of choices for the learners and an opportunity for them to document their learning and skills in several acceptable modes. Both employer verification and on-site performance testing are viewed as good methods of the assessment of occupational skills. Current licenses have been accepted as adequate proof of skills, however, judgements about such licenses should be based on knowledge of the performances required as a basis for obtaining and renewing such a license. For purposes of this program, only licenses which indicate proficiency in the skills are adequate. Little is known about the adequacy of the college readiness task as there has been insufficient experience by which to judge. As the demonstration continues, it is anticipated that more persons may select this option.

6. Continuous Feedback to Students

Progress through the assessment program is transmitted at each step to students through written reports mailed to their home address. Assignment tasks are not "failed" or "passed" and there is no "passing score". Competencies are simply demonstrated or not demonstrated and each competency is so noted on the task performance report to the student. If a competency has not been demonstrated (it either is incomplete or incorrect), an explanation of the error is included.

Progress Report. Ninety-two percent of the group replied that they understood the report concerning their performance on the tasks. Ten percent of these qualified their answers with comments about the reports:

> "I understood, but [I] got mad. Had worked hard, was discouraged and tempted to 'hang it up' but kept going because I was so close and wanted so bad."
>
> "I understood, though hard to believe I missed so much math."
>
> "At first I didn't understand, but called and it was explained."
>
> "I understood, but didn't like because 'not demonstrated' implies [I] didn't even try. I was bothered every time I saw it in spite of the distinctions between incomplete and incorrect."

For most, then, the report was clear enough. Eight percent felt the report could have been clearer and that the meaning of "demonstrated" and "not demonstrated" should be explained on the forms; a suggestion that can be used when the report format is revised. Sixty-six percent responded that the report was sent to them quickly enough. Twenty-four percent said the reports did not come at the prescribed time (ten days after the task was returned to the office). Ten percent noted that the process of reporting was slow, but improved, or that it was fast and then slowed down. Variations in the time that elapsed between reports was due to several factors; training of a new assessor, a heavy assessment load, and staff vacations that interrupted schedules.

Competency Spot Check. Part of the feedback mechanism providing progress information to learners takes the form of spotchecks of competencies performed before an assessor. Three spotchecks are included in the assessment procedure, one following each take-home task. Comptencies to be spotchecked are know in advance by the learners, and are reviewed with an assessor by appointment.

Eighty-six percent of persons questioned stated that they "understood what they would have to do in advance" when competencies were spotchecked. Twelve percent replied that they understood what was expected of them, but not how they would be asked to demonstrate competencies to the assessor. One person answered that the spotcheck mechanism was not clear. When asked "What competencies should be spotchecked?", most replied "the same things that are now checked." However, twelve persons made suggestions about the spotcheck procedure. Suggestions included "there should be more competencies spotchecked", spot checks were "too easy", spot checks were "too fast", and "there should be more math checked." Only five persons perceived the spotchecks as "repetitous."

CONCLUSION: There is evidence to conclude that, for most persons, the continuous feedback mechanism of the assessment system through reports and spotchecks is clear and understood. Suggestions for changes in the format of the report form and in the content of the spotcheck will be considered during program revision.

7. Unlimited Opportunities to Demonstrate Competencies

Learners may attempt as often as they wish to demonstrate those competencies they were unable to demonstrate adequately on the five basic assessment tasks. Since clearly defined competencies are being assessed, there is no need for a learner to repeat an entire task when a particular competency has not been demonstrated.

Post-Task Assessment. A final step in the assessment of the sixty-four generalized competencies is a post-task assessment, in which the

learners are given opportunities to demonstrate those competencies which they have failed to demonstrate through the tasks. In theory, the number of times that this assessment step is used could range from no post-task assessment (for those who demonstrate successfully all competencies at first try through the tasks) to as many as needed to demonstrate mastery. In practice, the range of post-task assessments needed for each learner is from one to eight. The range of competencies which were not demonstrated initially through the tasks and spotchecks was from three percent to thirty percent of the total sixty-four competencies required for the first fifty graduates.

Although persons may have unlimited post-task assessments, they may not make repeated attempts to demonstrate any one competency at any one post-task assessment interview. It is felt that since the post-task assessment is the opportunity to demonstrate incomplete or incorrect competencies, one attempt at any one time is sufficient. If the competency is not demonstrated, the assessor tells the learner of the source of the error, and recommends practice until mastering of the competency is attained. For some, this advice is heeded and the number of post-task assessments needed is minimal. For others, this step is difficult because all skill weaknesses become evident and accumulate during assessment, particularly if the learner has been lax in seeking instruction from whatever source.

CONCLUSION: Unlimited opportunities to demonstrate competencies is a necessary step in a program that requires one-hundred percent mastery of the required competencies. It provides an opportunity for the learner to once again demonstrate their competencies. For those who heed their

reports and invest some energy into reviewing or learning in order to demonstrate a competency, this step is effortless. For those who do not review or learn whatever is prescribed, repeated opportunities for demonstration are available.

Attitudes About the Testing Program in General. The first group of graduates from the program are pretty biased in favor of it, as might be expected. To actually hold a long-cherished high school diploma after years of frustration and anticipation is exciting and rewarding. So questions aimed at revealing weaknesses in the program did not generate much negative information. However, there were many answers to the question, "What did you like most about the program." They are listed below:

Enjoyed Most	Frequency Mentioned	Percent Mentioned
"everything" about it	38	76
the people, who cared	12	24
the challenge/feeling of accomplishment	8	16
doing tasks at night at home	7	14
graduation	6	12
health and first aid oral	6	12
learning about myself	4	8
it was "fun"	4	8
fairness/humanity of program	3	6
discovering I knew more than I thought I did	3	6
spot check/oral interviews	2	4
math	2	4
ability to relax	2	4
useful information	1	2
live performance	1	2

Comments about the program follow:

"[I] enjoyed every minute . . . it was definitely a challenge."

"everyone seemed to care"

"ability to do things at my own convenience . . . feeling of relaxation."

"liked most being able to do tasks at night . . . good for a working person."

"there wasn't anything I didn't enjoy . . . I like 'self-awareness' best [because] I enjoyed finding out things about myself. I found out that I knew more about things than I thought. [I have] felt insecure about myself because I didn't have a diploma."

"[I] learned more doing this than 1-1/2 years trying to pass the equivalency . . . because I could do at home and had help of staff . . . made it interesting to come. GED had stuff I won't use -- like modern math."

"I felt more sure of myself than in the GED -- others affected me [in the room with the GED]. [They] were all worried and upset . . . that upset me."

"enjoyed the studying, learning new things . . . there was none of it I didn't like."

When asked to state what was liked "least", 54 percent replied "there was nothing I liked 'least'." Some few points which were noted:

Liked Least	Frequency
program delays in beginning	3
traveling to the office for assessment	2
dreaded spot check	2
going to a live performance	2
running around to do the tasks	1
math	1
wasn't asked enough in health	1
took too long	1
Self-Directed Search	1

Suggestions for Improving the Diploma Program

The fifty graduates who were interviewed had suggestions for competencies to be included or omitted from the program which have already been reported on pages 50 and 51 in this report. A second question designed to double check for program suggestions was asked near the end of the hour interview. In response to this, 30 percent felt they had "no more suggestions." However, many others had some thoughts on program content or process.

Suggestions for Content Changes	Frequency Mentioned	Percent Mentioned
Broaden or change requirement on live performance	5	10
Add more English, grammar, etc.	4	8
More Health	4	8
Information on marriage	1	2
More information on community resources	2	4
More math	2	4
Questions necessity of belonging to an organization	1	2
Need for more human relations	1	2
Information on warranties	1	2
Suggestions for Process Changes		
Open a Cortland/Auburn office for assessment	5	10
Need for more publicity, more people made aware of program	4	8
More spot checks	1	2
Compare XD with GED	1	2
Two-week hold is unfair	1	2
Supply community maps	1	2
Employer letter	1	2

Suggestions for Process Changes	Frequency Mentioned	Percent Mentioned
Better resume, format	1	2
Make certain all understand self-assessment checklist	1	2
Change cartoon	1	2
Provide an LC that is interested	1	2

Comments about the program included:

"Don't know how [it could be improved] . . . it's really thorough . . . I think it'd be tough for some people with high school diplomas if they didn't study."

"Maybe math should have been harder . . . more on percentages to figure out what to buy and how much to pay, more on breaking down costs of purchases, like 3/4 lbs. of meat based on price per pound."

"Might have something other than a live performance for people who live out of town where performances are less frequent."

"People should find things out themselves . . . don't give them too much help."

"Have a center in Auburn [Cortland]. Traveling is inconvenient."

"Be sure candidates understand the meaning of Self-Assessment Checklist."

8. Program Participation and Attrition

Participation. The assessment procedures for the external diploma program began officially in January 1975. During the eleven month period as of November 1975, 137 persons are recorded as having entered the program. In this instance, "entered the program" includes the decision-making process of selecting the external diploma program as the appropriate alternative route to a high school diploma, and either partial or complete diagnostic testing. The total figure of 137 participants does not include individuals who merely inquired about the program. Also, it should be noted that it is

possible for individuals to enter the program at any time thus there is an irregular admissions distribution. Fewer persons enter the program during the summer months and around holiday seasons. As of November 1975, 61 persons (44.5%) of the 137 program participants had earned their diploma; 69 persons are now currently active in the assessment system. The rolling admissions policy and self-paced nature of the program affect the numbers of persons in any stage of the program at any time. The length of time an individual remains in the program is affected by several variables such as extent of review or learning necessary, time and energy available to devote to the program, and personal priorities and objectives.

Since it is possible to pace oneself, length of time in the program can vary from four weeks to six or seven months. Although data are not complete, around three months of participation in the assessment system seems to be the most frequently observed length of time taken to complete requirements.

Attrition. The process for collecting this data was formally initiated three months after the official start of the assessment system. Nonetheless, the evidence collected to date is accurate in numbers of persons who have dropped from the program: 27 or 19.5 percent of the group total of 137 who entered the program have not completed it.

Information given on the reasons for dropping the program is incomplete insofar as it is the perception of the learning consultant and may not reflect accurately the true motive of the candidate. The information is gathered by the learning consultant at a termination interview. Often, a combination

of reasons is given for a learner's failure to complete the program. These reasons are categorized below with their reported frequency.

Reason for Attrition (N = 27)	Frequency
Time (family illness, family schedule)	7
Low skills, discouragement	6
Family problems	4
Learning problems	4
Developmental problems early in program	3
Job reasons	2
Health	2
Choose other route to diploma (GED, 24-Hour Community College)	2
Lacks drive to finish	1
Moved out of town	1
Transportation problem	1
"Dropped out of sight"	1
"Reasons unknown"	5

CONCLUSION: Data on program participation does not reflect the variation in numbers of participants in the program at any one time. The rolling admissions policy and monthly awarding of degrees affects participation figures. For purposes of this report, only those persons who had seriously committed themselves to the program are considered in the eleventh month total of 137 participants. This figure has been broken out to identify total numbers of participants, numbers currently in the program, and numbers who have dropped the program for a variety of reasons.

These figures are expected to vary as a result of increased awareness and expansion of the program in the demonstration area.

C. The Postscript

Included in the interview protocol were two questions of further interest to the developers of the new assessment system. The first question asked, "How do you and your family feel about the program (now that you've earned your diploma)?" Seventy-two percent of the graduates used the words "everyone proud and excited," or "great, happy" to reflect the reactions of self, friends and family; 28 percent particularly mentioned the "excitement of my kids." Twelve percent felt that the program "encouraged me, made me feel more competitive, has been a blessing." Eight percent said they had family members who wished to participate in the program. Others reported that their families were proud that they [graduates] had "completed something." Fourteen percent felt that "not enough people know of this program" and that they would "recommend it to anyone."

Some comments selected from the answers given to this particular question are quoted below:

> "[They] are very pleased . . . and proud. [I'm] 'one of them again' . . . has more in common with them now (all the rest of the family have diplomas)."
>
> "[My] kids delighted [I] got high school diploma. [I'm] the first in my family in my generation."
>
> "Parents very impressed . . . mother has said [she] would like to do it. Wife was so impressed with program she said 'if she didn't already have the Equivalency, she would have liked to go through this program.' Children proud . . . has helped with their marks. Made them more motivated, now that father has accomplished this. Recommendations that they get more education has more weight now that I have my diploma."

"[My] ten-year old son proud. [My] mother bought me a wrist-watch because others in the family got one when they graduated from high school."

"[I have] been apologetic throughout life (because of no diploma), now [I] don't have to be."

"(For 50 years [there] hasn't been a male in my family graduated), I'm the first one. It's nice to be one of the 'first ones off the boat' . . . in the program and in the family. Felt bad when quit school, but it got too nerve-wracking."

CONCLUSION: Family and personal pride in earning the diploma has given graduates a psychological boost which is difficult to measure quantitatively. However, these comments and attendance at the two commencement exercises held to honor the graduates and their families have attested to their pride and joy. Some three-hundred parents, children, relatives and friends have attended the ceremonies and joined in the festivities. New York State Commissioner of Education, Ewald B. Nyquist, and Assistant Commissioner for Occupational and Vocational Education, Dr. Robert Seckendorf, have been the invited speakers at the convocations. Honored guests from the community including many who have participated in the development of the program can affirm these events as rewarding and heartwarming. Personal, family and community pride are caught for a lifetime in informal snapshots and long cherished diplomas are admired with awe.

The second question concerning the future plans of the graduates is difficult to tabulate accurately at this stage in the development of the program. Some graduates have had their diplomas for as long as nine months (since March 1975), while others have earned them as recently as October

1975. For this reason, responses to the question "what further plans have you now?" are varied. Graduates ate earning the diploma as an incentive or preparation for continued learning, or as the basis for an immediate and tangible reward. Examples of these answers follow.

The Diploma As An Incentive For Further Learning

"[I] want to be a veterinarian assistant . . . always wanted to, plans to investigate . . . was the reason for wanting the diploma."

"Would like to get some more smarts. Interested in a Police Science course."

"Now learning horseshoeing from village blacksmith . . . will become partners as well as work in the store."

"My wife and I are talking about enrolling in TC3 (Community College) this fall . . . not sure what we'll take. Diploma has 'fired me up.'"

"Going to Virginia to get FCC license . . . hope to enter OCC (Community College) in the fall."

"I'm taking a Grievance Procedure course at OCC (Community College)."

"I'm getting a Grade II Operator's License, now required by the State."

"Taking Civil Service course (for police work) . . . Law has been my gig."

The Diploma As A Basis For Immediate Reward

"[I] have been promoted to full Sergeant now that [I] have the diploma -- stripes and pay." (Wants to get a two-year degree now. Goes to professional law enforcement programs frequently in connection with job but also wants a degree now.)

"[I] am applying for Supervisor's opening in Receiving Department at work."

"[I] had to have diploma to become Foreman -- was promoted on the day I got the diploma with a $150 raise . . . then got promotion to Assistant Supervisor with another $150 raise -- now being groomed for Supervisor."

"Have gone on to Management Training School (employer paid for her course in Restaurant Management)."

"[I] have been accepted at the FBI Training Academy and will enter with the next class."

"[I] have been accepted in the Navy as a Chaplin Trainee."

CONCLUSION: Earning the diploma has stimulated interest in further learning and training for 54 percent of the group who have articulated either concrete plans or considerations about a next learning step. Tangible rewards, in terms of promotions and pay raises, have also been reported. However, exact data must be gathered in planned follow-up interviews. These will be conducted at an interval far enough removed in time from the actual diploma granting to allow for the anticipated learning event to have taken place. The immediate rewards of promotions, pay raises, "stripes," and job changes will also be examined. It is hoped that some passage of time will also enable the graduates to place this assessment experience in perspective. It will be of interest to the program developers to explore the motivations and aspirations of the graduates at a later date to determine if their energy and confidence is sustained.

D. Next Step

The first fifty adult graduates of the External High School Diploma Program are the subjects of this report. They have shared their observations about a particular testing program designed to meet their needs both in content and process. It is hoped that this data will support the efforts of educators who are searching for new ways to assess the learning outcomes of adult education programs.

The question of replicability and transferability of such a program are no longer a concern; similar programs are already underway in several states. The unique features of this assessment system have already provoked interest and imitation.

However, continued field testing of the original model is necessary for the collection of more data to answer tough questions which are still unanswered.

1. What Is the Cost of Assessment?

   Data on the cost of operating the program is being collected. The actual costs of hours of assessment are being tallied in an effort to find the range and average cost of assessment for each credential awarded.

2. What Are the Appropriate Personnel and Training Techniques Necessary for Assessors?

   Presently, a model for the selection and training of several new assessors is being designed and tested. The experience of the selection and training of personnel who are completely unfamiliar with the philosophy and administration of the program is a challenge. Since the role of the assessor is the key to

the success of this program, more experience is needed with this component.

3. What Are the Viable Systems for Such a Program?

   Adult education programs, through informal learning centers such as those used in adult education are a possible delivery system. But more novel non-traditional systems such as public libraries, mobile vans, or union or industrial sites should also be considered.

4. Who Grants the Credential?

   Central to the use of non-traditional sites as delivery systems for assessment of competencies is another major issue; which school systems or state systems credential the successful graduates of an external assessment program? Will local districts broaden their credentialing base to ratify learnings in such non-traditional sites?

These key questions remain as challenges for the continued demonstration of the external diploma program and are the subject for further study. The data from this present report confirm the necessity, feasibility and impact of the program as an educational alternative for adults. The search for answers continues.

Ruth S. Nickse

The Central New York External High School Diploma Program

A new competency-based high school diploma program for adults is being demonstrated over a three-year period in central New York State. The State Education Department has approved and financed the demonstration through the Division of Adult and Continuing Education as a means of expanding educational options and opportunities.

The project began with a Ford Foundation grant of development funds. Then a group of central New York school administrators, teachers, counselors, students, businessmen, and labor leaders, organized by Donn F. Vickers with assistance from the Syracuse University Research Corporation and a state grant, designed a flexible and credible supplement to the existing four-year high school diploma and the New York Equivalency High School Diploma. The new diploma recognizes performance in basic skills areas (math, reading) as well as in life skills (consumer, scientific, citizenship and health awareness, and occupational preparedness); it rewards advanced occupational/vocational, academic, and specialized skills. The demonstration and assessment are being conducted under my direction, with assistance from Linda Lehman-Hill and an assessment staff.

To complete the first portion of the diploma program, one must pass five tests designed to elicit the performance of the 64 designated "life-skill" competencies. An open testing technique is used; it is characterized by flexibility in time and location (there are three take-home tests), use of several communication modes (two oral interviews), explicit understanding of and open discussion of competencies to be demonstrated, and continuous feedback on progress. The second portion of the diploma assessment program requires the candidate to demonstrate either occupational/vocational skills, advanced academic skills, or specialized skills in community organization, in art, or in music.

One year's successful employment at the same job with verification by the employer may be presented as evidence of entry-level job skills to fulfill the occupational/vocational requirement. Or a performance assessment is arranged on the job. A master craftsperson, one who is employed in the field selected by the candidate, develops the job criteria at an entry level and supervises and evaluates a candidate's performance. Proof of certain current New York State occupational licenses also may be presented as evidence of occupational skill.

Admissions directors of local colleges developed criteria for the demonstration of advanced academic skills. The candidates complete a portfolio which contains selected pieces of information concerning the feasibility of their educational objectives, as well as evidence of the ability to do college work. This evidence may be a product to be judged by experts as an example of the ability to do college-level work, or it may be acceptable scores on a standardized test.

The assessment program leads to a local school diploma which is awarded on behalf of the New York commissioner of education by the Board of Education of the Cortland, New York, Enlarged City School District. The Cortland diploma is awarded to individuals from a five-county area who successfully complete the competency requirements. On March 11, 1975, Ewald Nyquist, New York State commissioner of education, presented Cortland High School diplomas to the first 18 graduates of the program. Commissioner Nyquist hailed the program as "humane and relevant." He expressed the desire that it be considered for statewide adoption after the demonstration phase is completed.

A regional committee acts as a school board for the diploma program. It is representative of the community, with persons from local school districts as well as from labor and industry serving. It monitors the assessment procedure, approves candidates for the diploma on a monthly basis, and advises on program development.

While persons over 18 who have left school will be accepted, the main beneficiaries are the 43% of central New Yorkers over 25 years of age who possess no high school diploma. They are given another chance to demonstrate their abilities, to improve their skills, and to enjoy official state recognition of their competencies, wherever and whenever acquired. The time and location of educational experiences needed to meet diploma criteria will vary with each candidate's objectives, motivations, abilities, prior experiences, and personal situation. However, the program is designed to recognize and reward what adults have learned and can do, through their experiences as adults, parents, workers, and community members.

By June, 1975 some 35 adults had received diplomas through this assessment procedure, and some 55 others are involved in the self-paced assessment process. Though the age range of candidates is from 18 to 60, most candidates are between 30 and 50. They are employed in a variety of occupations. There are insurance and car salesmen, small businessmen, paraprofessionals (in teaching and health-related fields), deputy sheriffs, and security guards. Their motivation for working toward the diploma is high, and there is little attrition from the program. Reasons for desiring a diploma are varied: It is needed for job mobility, college entry, or for self-satisfaction.

The administrative agency designing and executing the demonstration during the trial period is the Regional Learning Service of Central New York, a division of the Syracuse University Research Corporation, whose director is Francis U. Macy. If the new diploma program is subsequently adopted statewide, its administration could be assumed by city school districts, BOCES, or other regional bodies that might emerge.

For a 30-page description of the program, send $2 to cover cost of duplication and mailing to the Regional Learning Service, 405 Oak St., Syracuse, NY 13203. □

APPENDIX A

RUTH S. NICKSE is director and coordinator of assessment, Central New York External High School Diploma Project, Regional Learning Services, Syracuse, N.Y.

PHI DELTA KAPPAN
A JOURNAL FOR THE PROMOTION OF LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1975

About Education

High Schools Giving Skill-Based Diplomas

By JUDITH CUMMINGS

Not too long ago, a television commercial depicted an Abraham Lincoln like character being offered a taxi driver's job he admitted that he had no college degree but that he had "done a lot of reading and studying, sort of on my own."

The public-service message to adults was to earn college credits "for what you've learned in life" through external-degree programs, now a staple of many colleges and universities.

That concept is being expanded, with the blessing of the State Education Department, in a new pilot project that offers a high school diploma to adults based on their competence to function as workers, parents and citizens.

The program is a variation on a trend that has such states as Oregon beginning to use skills competency as the standard for high school graduation. And the emphatime when many employers and college administrators are complaining that a traditional diploma no longer guarantees that its recipient can even read and write.

The program, Central New York External High School Diploma Project, operates in five counties surrounding Syracuse — Onondaga, Madison, Cortland, Oswego and Cayuga. It is believed to be the first program in the United States to award high school diplomas for the demonstration of competencies. The diplomas—60 have been awarded since March — are granted by the Cortland school district and are the same as those earned by regular high school students.

Flexible Alternative

The model is being tested by the State Education Department as a more flexible alternative to existing methods for an older person to earn a diploma, the best known of which is the high school-equivalency examination.

Alexander Gardner, 1863

Abraham Lincoln

"We've gotten so swept away by putting bunches of people in big rooms and giving them multiple-choice tests that we've forgotten there are other ways of getting and testing knowledge," says Dr. Ruth S. Nickse, director of the project for the nonprofit Regional Learning Service.

Abilities are shown through the completion of simulated tasks, based on real-life problems, which are done at home without time limits.

A sample task involves looking for a house—locating a community, calculating expenses in relation to income, understanding a lease —as a "practical" way to test computation, reading, comprehension and other abilities.

Diploma-seekers are required to demonstrate competence in 64 general areas and more advanced knowledge in beginning job skills, readiness for college or special talent.

Personal satisfaction apparently competes with job advancement as a motivating force. The first 50 graduates include several who have gone on to community college, civil servants who need a diploma to advance and a 61-year-old widow running a dairy fairm. The widow, Dr. Nickse believes, is part of a substantial number of people who "view a high school diploma as a piece of unfinished business in this world."

One Man's Experience

James Lary of Syracuse is typical in that he already had a job, a videotape operator at a television station, when he entered the diploma program. But the 25-year-old former community worker may be atypical in that he dropped out of high school a scant three months before graduation, forfeiting several college scholarship offers, because of heavy family responsibilities combined with a lack of confidence in his ability to do college work.

Not having a diploma, he said in an interview, "was such a psychological drawback."

"I knew I was prepared—I had enough information—but the diploma was a goal I should have accomplished." Mr. Lary said. In a few months, he plans to enter Onondaga Community College to study broadcast engineering.

The State Education Commissioner, Ewald B. Nyquist, is one of the advocates of this route to graduate status and hopes the model proves suitable for use in other school districts.

"O.K.," Mr. Nyquist said, "so they don't know all there is to know about social studies, but they have attained adult skills that show they can carry on their life."

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C

LIST OF RECIPIENTS OF SED REPORT

Fiorello H. LaGuardia
Community College
Long Island City, New York

Fort Dodge Senior High School
Fort Dodge, Iowa

Township High School District 214
Mount Prospect, Illinois

New York State College of
Agriculture and Life Sciences
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York

Ithaca High School
Ithaca, New York

Oneida/Madison/Herkimer County BOCES
Yorkville, New York

Bellevue High School
Bellevue, Washington

Community Learning Center
Cambridge, Massachusetts

LAUSD
Los Angeles, California

University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Office of the State Superintendent
State of Montana
Helena, Montana

Education Component
Lowell Model Cities
Lowell, Massachusetts

UNESCO Institute for Education
Hamburg, Germany

Eric Clearinghouse on Urban Education
New York, New York

Fayetteville-Manlius Schools
Manlius, New York

National Association of Secondary
School Principals
Reston, Virginia

Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey

Morehead State University
Morehead, Kentucky

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
Portland, Oregon

Broome Community College
Binghamton, New York

Metropolitan Administrative Service
Center
Portland, Oregon

Tompkins-Cortland Community College
Dryden, New York

Sentinel Secondary School
West Vancouver, British Columbia
Canada

Maecom
Momouth Adult Education Commission
Eatontown, New Jersey

North Vancouver School District
North Vancouver, British Columbia
Canada

Durham Academy
Durham, North Carolina

Margaret S. Sterck School for the
Hearing Impaired
Newark, Delaware

The Institute of Mental Measurements
Highland Park, New Jersey

Department of Health, Education
and Welfare
National Institute of Education
Washington, D. C.

State GED Administrator
Department of Community Colleges
North Carolina State Board of
Education
Raleigh, North Carolina

Office of Adult Education
State of South Carolina
Department of Education
Columbia, South Carolina

Superintendent of Schools
Santa Clara County
San Jose, California

University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Phi Delta Kappan
Bloomington, Indiana

Cambridge School Department
Adult High School Diploma Program
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Saturday Review
New York, New York

Department of Education
State of Oregon
Salem, Oregon

Bureau of Adult Continuing Community
Education
State of New Jersey
Trenton, New Jersey

Ithaca College
Ithaca, New York

Educational Testing Service
Princeton, New Jersey

Division of Adult and Community
Education
Indianapolis, Indiana

College Entrance Examination Board
Waltham, Massachusetts

Education Commission of the States
Denver, Colorado

National Association for Public
Continuing and Adult Education
Washington, D. C.

Kean College of New Jersey
Union, New Jersey

University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois

Oswego County Board of Educational
Services
Mexico, New York

Doubleday and Company, Inc.
New York, New York

Harvard Graduate School of Education
Cambridge, Massachusetts

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Continuing Professional Education
Urbana, Illinois

Division of Continuing Education
New York State Education Department
Albany, New York

Comstock Community Schools
Comstock, Michigan

University of Toledo
Toledo, Ohio

Director of Continuing Education
Baldwinsville Central Schools
Baldwinsville, New York

American Technical University
Killeen, Texas

Madison Adult Education Center
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Northeast Minnesota Higher Education Council
Mesabi Community College
Virginia, Minnesota

Adult Education Department
Norwich Central Schools
Norwich, New York

Supervisor, Adult Education
Chesapeake Public Schools
Chesapeake, Virginia

Eastern Michigan University
Ypsilanti, Michigan

Township High School
Highland Park, Illinois

Northeast R-IV School District
Cairo, Missouri

Los Angeles City Schools
Los Angeles, California

AAE Abilene Adult Education Cooperative
Abilene, Texas

Developmental Research School
Tallahassee, Florida

University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

Director, Community Service and Continuing Education
Utah System of Higher Education
Utah

Coordinator, Central City Occupational Center
Los Angeles City Unified School District
Los Angeles, California

Northshore Education Center
Glencoe, Illinois

Director, Adult and Continuing Education
Illinois Office of Education
Springfield, Illinois

Day Adult High School
Indianapolis, Indiana

Southeast State Missouri University
Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Adult Education Center
Dade County Public Schools
Homestead, Florida

Eric Wentworth, Educator Editor
Washington Post
Washington, D. C.

Bureau of Research
Massachusetts State Education Department
Boston, Massachusetts

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.
New York, New York

Malcolm Knowles
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, North Carolina

North Shore Education Center
Glencoe, Illinois

OECD
Paris, France

Productivity Division
National Institute of Education
Washington, D. C.

Danforth Foundation
St. Louis, Missouri

National Extension College
Cambridge, England

Central Michigan University
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

Utah System of Higher Education
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dr. Bianca Marguglio
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

New Jersey Adult Educator
Union, New Jersey

University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

HEW Region II
New York, New York

Office of Employment and Training
Fulton, New York

Harvard Graduate School of Education
Cambridge, Massachusetts

SOURCE: Case Studies
Client Data Form
(N=50)

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS ON FIRST FIFTY GRADUATES OF THE CENTRAL NEW YORK EXTERNAL DIPLOMA PROGRAM

	Total	%	
AGE			
18-19 years	2	4	
20-29 years	8	16	
30-39 years	15	30	) 58%
40-49 years	14	28	)
50-59 years	6	12	
60-69 years	4	8	
Unknown	1	2	
	50		
COUNTY OF ORIGIN			
Cayuga	2	4	
Cortland	15	30	
Madison	3	6	
Onondaga	28	56	
Oswego	1	2	
Other (Chenango)	1	2	
	50		
MARITAL STATUS			
Married	35	70	
Divorced	4	8	
Separated	7	14	
Widowed	2	4	
Single	2	4	
	50		
GED INFORMATION			
Took GED	20	40	
Did not take GED	24	48	
Unknown	6	12	
	50		
How Many Times Taken?			
One	11	22	
Two	4	8	
Three	2	4	
Four, or more	3	6	
	20		

	Total	%	
RACE			
Black	16	32	
White	34	68	
	50		
SEX			
Male	26	52	
Female	24	48	
	50		
YEARS IN SCHOOL			
8th grade	5	10	
9th grade	10	20	
10th grade	17	34	
11th grade	14	28	
12th grade	2	4	
Unknown	2	4	
	50		
FAMILY INCOME			
Under $8,000	9	18	
$8,000 to $15,000	14	28	) 38%
$15,000 to $20,000	5	10	)
Over $20,000	2	4	
Unknown*	20	40	
	50		
YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT AT PRESENT JOB SITE			
0-2 years	11	22	
3-5 years	9	18	) 38%
6-8 years	10	20	)
9-11 years	0	--	
12-19 years	3	6	) 22%
20-29 years	8	16	)
At Home	3	6	
Unemployed	2	4	
Unknown	4	8	
	50		

* This question was not asked of the original 18 graduates.

TYPE OF INDIVIDUALIZED ASSESSMENT

	Total	%
Employer Verification Letter:	30	60
New York State License (Cosmetology):	2	4
Advanced Academic:	1	2
Special Assessments:	17	34
	50	

Special Assessments:

Assistant Manager-Restaurant	1
Automobile Body Repair	1
Automobile Mechanics	1
Automobile Sales and Management	1
Basic Machine Operator	1
Contractor	1
Dairy Farming	1
Grocery Store Management	1
Home Management	3
Meatcutting	1
Modeling	1
Small Business-Trailer Court	1
Switchboard Operator	1
Television Repair	1
Upholstery	1
	17

SOURCE: Case Studies

JOB CATEGORIES OF EXTERNAL DIPLOMA GRADUATES

Helping Professions

Counselor Aide, Job Interview, MDTA
Health, Human Services, Education
Social Work Aide, Administrative Assistant
Teacher Aide (3)
Nurse's Aide
Mental Hygiene Therapy Aide
Director, Social Agency
Community Worker, MDTA

Service Industry

Assistant Manager, Luncheonette
Reservations/Payroll Clerk, Motel
Lead Waitress
Department Manager (Montgomery Ward)
Office Manager, Life Insurance
Beautician
Trailer Court Owner/Operator
Switchboard Operator (Hospital)
Manager, IGA Grocery Store
Meatcutter, IGA Grocery Store
Dairy Farming

Prison/Corrections

Corrections Officer (2)
Sergeant, Deputy Sheriff
Chief Investigator, Sheriff's Office

Factory-Related Jobs

Quality Control Supervisor
Inspector/Typewriter Repair
Group Leader - Supervisor
Customer Order Assembler
Parts Shipping Clerk
Test Equipment Developer
Foreman, Printing Department
Foreman, Production/Quality Control

Mechanical

Body Mechanic
Construction Engineer
TV Studio Video Tape Engineer
Maintenace/Mechanic (2)
Chief Water Plant Operator
Supervising Foreman, Water Plant

Clerical/Office

Clerical-Typist (2)
Expense Report Clerk

SOURCE: Case Studies (N=50)

OTHER SCHOOLING NOTED FOR EXTERNAL DIPLOMA GRADUATES

	Total
College Courses	
University College-Clerical	1
Community College - Tompkins-Cortland	1
Six-Month Secretarial (Rutgers)	1
College Prep-Cooperative	1
Job-Related or Sponsored	
Training Certification - Train Car Salesmen	1
Teacher In-Service	2
Basic Skills	1
Building Clutches	1
Sheriff's Course - (2) Police Academy	3
Management Training	2
New York Telephone Trained Operator	1
Electronics	1
Hospital Switchboard	1
Automotive Repair	1
Adult Education Courses/Evening School/BOCES	
English, Math and History	1
ABC for GED	1
Oil Painting	1
Oil Burner and Plumbing, Fabricating of Plastics, Welding, Applied Math, Blueprint Reading, Advanced Welding	1
Advanced Planning, Office Management, Computer Programming, etc.	1
Upholstering	1
Proprietary	
Business Course	1
Beauty School	2
Floor Covering	1
Modeling Courses	1
Correspondence School	
TV Repair; GED; Electronics	1 each
Manpower Training	
Clerical	2
Syracuse Education Opportunity Center	1
Health-Related	
Nurse's Aide Certificate	1
First Aid - Civil Defense	1
No Further Schooling Noted	12

SOURCE: Case Studies

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES ENGAGED IN BY GRADUATES*

	Total	%
Church Sunday School Teachers, Choir, Vestry, Fellowship Clubs, Youth Work	13	26
Educational School Board, Parents Groups	2	4
Political Village Board, Campaign Manager (Mayoral), Town Council, Citizen Advocate	5	10
Fraternal	2	4
Sports	3	6
Ambulance/Volunteer Fire	3	6
Scouts	3	6
4-H Club	1	2
Volunteer Collection Easter Seal, etc.	2	4
Health/Child Care Foster Parent	2	4
Salvation Army	2	4
Job-Related Professional	3	6
Clubs Senior Citizens, Singing Toastmasters, Community Clubs, Home League, etc.	6	12

*Some graduates gave several responses and each was tallied

SOURCE: Task IV Oral Interview
Client Data Form
(N=50)

PURPOSE FOR SEEKING EXTERNAL DIPLOMA*

	Total	%
Job Reasons		
Obtain better paying job	10	
Become eligible for promotion	4	
Better job	3	
Job advancement	4	
More satisfying job	1	
Get office job	1	
Get a job	2	
Ensure future employment	2	
More salary	1	
Keep present job	3	
Job mobility	1	
	32	64
Future Education		
College	14	
Social work	2	
Secretarial	2	
FBI school	1	
Business degree	1	
Science	1	
Police Science	1	
Restaurant Management	1	
U. S. Navy Chaplin Training	1	
English	1	
Art	1	
Bookkeeping	2	
Early Childhood Education	1	
LPN/BOCES program	1	
Typing	1	
	31	62
Career Change		
New line of business	1	
Nursing	1	
Corrections officer	1	
	3	6
License Requirement		
FCC	1	
Supervisor Grade II	1	
	2	4
Self-Satisfaction	6	12
Set Example for Children	2	4

*Some graduates gave several responses and each was tallied.

APPENDIX E

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20208

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Ruth S. Nickse, Ph.D.
Regional Learning Service
of Central New York
405 Oak Street
Syracuse, New York 13203

Dear Ruth:

Thanks very much for your letter and for your copy of the interim report on the competency based high school diploma program for adults. It looks very, very interesting and I have shared the report with several members of our staff. Having talked with a number of people from New York State in the last month or two I am convinced that you are way ahead of anybody else in the country as far as the development of a meaningful adult education is concerned. Particularly on access to the variety of educational institutions and structures that are available in a given geographical area. I have been terribly impressed with the work of Norm Kurland in this area. When you get your final report done I would really love to have a copy.

Best wishes and thanks for writing.

Sincerely,

Harold L. Hodgkinson
Director

COLLEGE FOR HUMAN SERVICES 201 VARICK STREET, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10014 (212) 989-2002

Audrey C. Cohen, President

May 6, 1975

Dr. Ruth Nickse, Project Director
and Coordinator of Assessment
Regional Learning Service of Central New York
Syracuse University Research Corporation
405 Oak Street
Syracuse, New York

Dear Ruth:

I have carefully read through your progress report to the Ford Foundation and wish to share with you my first impressions. Overall I am deeply impressed with your work, both from the perspective of what it means to adult education and to the impact it could have on the world of testing. It is obvious that you have carefully thought through what would be meaningful to the adult population. This is itself a major achievement. Much of what is now passing as adult education is still basically unrelated to the life and educational skills of the adult, to their specific needs, and to their potentiality to achieve new levels of personal and professional growth.

I am most impressed and moved by the caring and humane assessment system that you have developed. It is so rare to see a researcher really work through the problems that have continued to plague testing and the testing environment. You have made major steps toward de-mythologizing the testing environment, strengthening the confidence of the adult students to really provide a careful look at their competence, and provide a solid experience worthy of the best of any adult. I was reminded, as I thought back over the history of testing, of the great attempt of Davis at Chicago to find both a testing environment and a test which permitted children to demonstrate mastery. In an important way, you have made a breakthrough for the adult, and especially the adult who may already feel embarrassed or strange in the testing environment. But your approach should not be confused with its present students. Would that all forms of testing at all levels could be humane! I still await the time when people can approach a test as an opportunity for the enhancement of their learning. I am fully aware of how far we are from such a place when I see how our CHS students respond to the idea of continuous recredentialing. Yet, they, you, we are taking the critical first steps toward that new and important day when the humane elements are seen as critical to the construction of the test and the testing environment. I applaud your courage. I also await further evidence from your very exciting experience.

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I look forward to our future meetings and the possibility of further work with you.

Cordially,

Stephen C. Sunderland, SB.

Stephen C. Sunderland,
Dean

SCS:SB

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY | AT RALEIGH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION
BOX 5504 ZIP 27607

November 26,1975

Dr. Ruth S. Nickse
Regional Learning Service
of Central New York
405 Oak Street
Syracuse, New York 13203

Dear Ruth:

I too, greatly enjoyed our visit on the ride to O'Hara Airport, and found a most informative and stimulating experience to learn in more detail about your program.

My reaction from where I sit to the list of competencies and diagnostic processes is completely positive. It seems to me that they are pegged to where the adult learners are coming from, and if this sounds like "scouting requirements," so be it. I am enclosing a couple of documents that you may find some interest.

I appreciate your permission to share your documents with my graduate students, and assure that they will not be disseminated beyond our family circle.

Cordially yours,

Malcolm S. Knowles,
Professor

MSK:km

North Carolina State University at Raleigh is a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina

Central YMCA Community College
of the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago
211 West Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60606

November 19, 1975

Ruth S. Nickse, Ph.D.
Regional Learning Service of New York
405 Oak Street
Syracruse, New York 13203

Dear Dr. Nickse:

Your presentation at the NAPCAE Convention in Chicago was an excellent one. The Performance Assessment System for a high school diploma is a project that has been on my mind for some time. We have an assessment program for the A.A. Degree called Life Experience Credentialing, and I have been considering a similar program for adults who do not have a high school diploma. I also find that the GED program has many built in assumptions about learning that are detrimental to adult achievement of the GED.

Central YMCA Community College is a part of the Metropolitan YMCA of Chicago. The College and the YMCA high school are the two educational components of the Chicago Metro YMCA. Among our many objectives, we have the goal of a continuum design for a high school - college mix. With the high school as part of our educational component, it seems to me that we have an excellent source for granting the high school diploma to adults. I also can see that many adult students who enter our college through the Developmental Institute and who do not have a high school diploma, can also be assessed for high school units while they are taking the pre-college preparation courses. These latter courses can also be applied toward high school units.

Your program has a lot to offer us as a guide to developing our own special approach. I would appreciate it if you could supply me with as much information regarding your program as is conveniently possible. I would be happy to pay for any information and materials you could send me.

Again, congratulations on a real innovative way for adults to achieve a high school diploma. I am sure your work will eventually have a great impact in education.

Sincerely,

Gordon Blacketer

Gordon Blacketer, Asst. Dean
Extended Learning Division

GB:bm

Three locations in the Loop: 211 West Wacker Drive/19 South LaSalle/29 West Randolph Street
High School/College/Continuing Education Division/Developmental Institute/English Language Institute/Applied Science
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